

Craig Mullins

<http://goodbrush.com/>



This PDF has been put together from Sijun Forums by Heirwegh Jonas. For questions or problems
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Hey there,

I learned to paint (still am) by doing hundreds, if not thousands, of little sketches. Don't spend more than 1/2 hour on them. Try to get the main information down as quickly as possible. Get rid of the plain white canvas as soon as you can. Cover it up with something, anything, just so you can start comparing values.

quick, no fuss, but the main info is there. The media, whether photoshop or real paint is unimportant.

Some people have asked about a staged drawing, here is a movie file that shows the whole process. That's better than stages, eh? It is 1.7 mb, so be prepared. It is also from a painter script. which is not my normal habitat, so watch me screw up quite a few times. But the idea of general to specific is pretty clear.

bridge movie

have fun!

spoooooge

I use the pen (finally) for the loose stuff, so the opacity goes up and down. I try to think of it as thin glazes of acrylic paint. It gives variations of color and value.

The texture above is really straight painting, with a little color dodge thrown in on top- nothing special. If you were to splatter some ink on a board and scan it, good luck trying to duplicate it. But I think this misses the point that if the basics are right, the texture does not matter much. More basics, less technique

The eye is a transparent sphere, and the iris is a dish that is set into it.(1) When seen from the side, it forms an ellipse.(2) If she was looking this way, the drawing is kinda correct, but the iris would be mostly obscured by the smaller opening of the lids towards the side of the eye.

To be really subtle, the far eye would be a slightly more closed ellipse, depending on the lens, but in a straight profile, ya don't see it of course. Another real trick is the front of the eyeball is raised, so it is not a true sphere. it does affect highlights a little.

In 3, see the lids covering the eyeball, don't forget to show the thickness of the lids! They ride on top of the eyeball.

I know it's tough thinking "I gotta know all this stuff?!?" but just pick it up here and there and think about things on your own, and the most important thing, never forget.

AS far as the rest of the picture, the figure is overexposed, lit areas going straight white, while the background is slightly underexposed. Darken the BG or paint some halftones in the skin.

In answer to your question about metallic looking surfaces, it is more about value than anything inherent in digital art. Digital makes it technically easier to add too much contrast, but it is really a mistake of beginning painters regardless of the media.

I know it is hard to understand what I mean, but look at Leo's woman that I sketched over.

The values in the original are extreme, either black or white. In my sketch the values are closer together and go dark or light in only a few cases. This is a general rule for painting matte as opposed to glossy surfaces. It may be a matter of preference, but women esp. do not like being painted like they are shiny(read sweaty or greasy)

You are looking up at the head, see bottom planes more than sides.

Don't overstate values! Sneak up on them from the middle! f

Draw from life more

The initial 3-d rendering was done in form-z and was just a few tubes. I rerendered the same tubes going into the distance and downward. This is what is so great about 3-d: complex forms correctly drawn. The enemy then becomes the goofy 3-d lighting and the harsh edges where no edges should be.

The lighting is difficult. The vertical god rays area not technically correct, since they imply a point source through an aperture with particles in the air, and what I drew above is not a point source, but a bank of lights. I just thought it looked cool to do it that way.

I used the warm touches to add color contrast so it would not go completely cool.

Yeah, I played up contrast and edges in the eye and let the other stuff fall away. I did play up the gloss in the eye, it is another way to differentiate materials. Women, "attractive" ones, at least, should be very flat, or matte, and one way to make this seem so is to play up the gloss in other areas.

Other tricks to make them seem fashion-ish:

large distance from upper eyelid to eyebrow(reverse this for a tough guy)

No nose at all

High contrast, graphic lips and eyes

Don't shortchange the back of her head either.

Do not model the forms and planes of the head, use the eyes and lips and the outline of the face to show form. This will also help the matte quality of the skin.

These are very general cliches, don't abuse them or it gets into lens flare territory.

I like greasy women, but clients don't

The more layers, the less rez you can run, so it is a trade off. Layers for commercial work are great, cause you never know what they will come up with next.

Some plan is better than no plan, so I try to keep layers organized by depth, as in object overlap, background to foreground. Also, those really bad ideas are good to keep on a layer until your head clears

Skin is really translucent and reflective. It doesn't have a true local color. I find that my biggest challenge in doing digital art is to get away from a shiny, metallic, processed look.

Here's a couple of skin ptgs. They are not the greatest paintings, but they have the variety of color and the warm and cool subtleness that make flesh seem more alive.

There is no such thing as brown. (No such thing as penguin crap mauve, either) It is really dark red. Learn to think of color and value as separate entities. Analyze color and value separately- even converting to grayscale to see if things check out.

Cypher said-

"And, like I said before, a very important reason that Dhabih, Mullins, Caudle, etc. have developed so thoroughly is that they never had people telling them that "that sucks" or "your anatomy sucks" or "the ear is too low and the nose is cricked.""

I have heard nothing but criticism all my life. Mom always loves everything, but she's is on a very short list. All the feedback I have gotten from my site has been a revelation.

The first few semesters at school were boot camp. I had three instructors tell me to go do something else with my life because I clearly had no ability. Drawings were torn of the wall and walked on.

My best critic is Dad. He looks out from behind his paper and says, "The arm looks busted." His secret is he never tells me how to fix it(he knows he doesn't know).

If you do artwork professionally, be prepared to get crapped on daily. I spent 3 hours a day last week with a bunch of ad people who could not find their asscheeks with both hands and a flashlight. They were literally moving things around one pixel at a time. Commerce dictates you keep your mouth shut. It is an aspect of professionalism.

Only consider what was said, don't worry about who said it. An amateur may not be able to tell you how to fix it, but do listen. If the content is valid, use it, if not, disregard it.

This is a very special perk of being an amateur. When you are a pro, you have to do what you are told, valid or not.

Artists are looked at as kind of a pond scum. The art director you are working for might have been (if you are lucky) a failed illustrator at one time and failed upward to art director. The attitude is "I could do this much better, but I am busy doing more important things on this project, so do exactly what I say." It is a very great challenge to still do good work in these circumstances.

This is not always true, but about %80 in my experience.

Have fun!

I think those books area just fine for anyone. He was a very colorful character, and I had the pleasure of taking his class.

I like his approach because it teaches a very "3-d aware" approach to the figure. By this I mean you think in your mind about the structure of something, the actual forms and "draw around" it. The opposite approach is designing or copying shapes. Both are required to do the best work.

Other anatomy books are Vanderpoel, Bridgeman, and a few others that escape me at the moment. All teach a very different way of thinking about the figure. Leyendecker gave much credit to Vanderpoel.

A master I new said he learned to draw figures by copying Jack Hamm (!) This makes a lot of sense. To caricature something well requires a complete understanding.

Wow, what a neat thread and the ideas expressed show a lot of thought. I'm impressed.

I think the bigger question is the art school you are going to worth anything.

I went to school in industrial design, then illustration. The main reason I went back to school is I wanted to improve my figure knowledge. I could not imagine going through life with a weakness in that area. It would be very limiting professionally.

Keep in mind that I am really biased. My work requires very academic techniques and approaches. Other people have a more fine art approach to illustration. I think that teaching academics gives more freedom later on, but some would argue that learning the basics "infects" your perceptions. Could be.

If your goal is to get a job (and it should not be limited to just this) yes a degree can help.

But really think about what they are teaching you. The thoughts about crash courses in new media being useless are right on the money to me. You are right, Affected.

In my area of work, your income varies directly with the ability to draw. This is just as true even if you are doing 3-d. A mouse pusher is pretty worthless. And

by drawing skill I mean knowledge, not just what pops into your mind when I say "drawing." It is a design sense and refinement, part structural and part judgment. Developing this, I believe, will put you far ahead no matter what you decide to do later on.

Sooo, if you are learning the basics, stick with it. If they are trying to BS you into being a half-assed fine artist, leave and find some place with some content.

PS no offense to fine artists, but they are a totally different animal. The training involved is also very different. A lot of schools like to blur the edges, and it is not cool to either discipline, IMHO

Draw a square, draw your VP. Trace back corners. Draw back wall. Find middle of faces by drawing lines along diagonals. Trace the intersection in the middle of the faces back to VP. Where your midpoints are tangent to the edges of the cube, your ellipse will touch the edge. So now you know where the corners are, the widest point and narrowest point (called major and minor axes) so you can now draw in your ellipses.

Note that the major and minor axes are always at 90 degrees. If the ellipse is the wheel of a car, think of the minor ellipse being the axle. The major axis is then just drawn perpendicular. Easy!

I guess I meant by "boring" that the layout was intended to be a BG, with no action, etc. Also, the subtleties of ship design were beyond the time I had. I did a quick search on Corbis on sailing ships, and came up with thousands of great ref photos. This could have been more interesting if there had been design time. The deck could be crowned, to allow drainage, and as was the case in AliasMoze's pic, the turn of the hull showing up in the outer railing. On and on.

The proportions area also a bit clunky, but I just stuck too closely to something that was over proportion (animation style) to begin with. I kept everything squared off because I wanted to make a point about accurate drawing, and keeping the tricks to a minimum is best for that.

clip from aborted column:

The drawing was done pretty quickly, just to get some proportions, and so as to show that you should do as i do and not as i say, I did the drawing. Notice the vanishing point of the stairs is up in the sky somewhere. It is important to plot it if you are not confident of drawing it by feel. See the top lit portions of the stairs? As the stairs go lower, you see more of the tops of them, and the area lit becomes thicker. This visual clue is very important, and leaving this progression up to feel might not let you take advantage of it.

There's a cannon in there? Where? cool.

Danny,

I sometimes use a digital compost pile. Use a photo (I have a favorite of my cat) and paste it in at low opacity. Gives a little movement and helps with that mechanical digital feel. Just like canson paper.

The gamma issue is a little hair raising. Yes, I paint on a mac (yech) and it is a higher gamma, the middle of the curve is shifted higher. I look at the stuff on my site, or posted here (I surf with a PC) and yeah, it is really dark. I have never bothered with monitor calibration, as I work with relative values and colors. If a painting is light or dark or color shifted, it can be nudged by whoever hired me. It is their painting anyway. And if I do calibrate it, to what? I do like to paint at a lighter gamma, as it forces me to not crush anything. That's really my only concern. You can get away with murder at darker gammas. But it does help with banding. Other than that, if a file is a little off, fix it later. But the problem is as you state, on the web, good luck. Thanks for the lead, I will look into ICC profiles. Never occurred that someone might be interested in the "absolute," if there is such a thing.

I think I will come up with a monitor profile for the web, that will help here.

Frost- cool! you are thinkin' straight! Yes, that was going to be something I was going to talk about. The correct shadow would be behind the viewer. I moved it up because "don't let reality get in the way of 'art'" I just wanted the light where it was, and the shadow where it was. Really, this is not the ideal solution (do it wrong and hide under 'art') but it is a time saving compromise.

That bright blue railing is a screw up. Good eye.

Color is really complicated. Night time, in general, cools down and water

condenses out of the air. What is the difference between morning and evening lighting? Morning is cooler, evening is warmer. Why? I don't know, but I will guess. Water, whether we are under it or just a lot of it in the air absorbs the shorter wavelengths, or blue penetrates better. Hence a cooler cast in morning, relatively speaking. In the afternoon, winds, whatever the source, have picked up dust and the heat of the sun has dried out the air. Sunlight is warmer then. These effects are subtle, and the closer you get to neutral the more relative the effect. Look at a flat overcast sky. Is it warm or cool? It could go either way. Color, either the true color of an object or light, is a relative thing, in the context that is meaningful to artists. There are some propeller headed ways of achieving 'neutral gray,' but that is beside the point.

So in this pic, you have wood, which could be any color from rich stained cherry to bleached, gray weathered decking all lit by a very strongly tinted light. The result is everything turns blue. But look at the fine definition of different types and colors of wood. Some a little redder, some a little more neutral, some textural, some smooth. Very important to get a variety of materials. The steps are white because 1) you are seeing them at a low angle, and all surfaces increase reflectivity as the angle of vision goes lower, and 2) it may have been worn smooth from traffic. I thought about these two things and decided to treat the stairs differently than other surfaces. Have you noticed that a lot of artwork looks like plastic, or at the least is monotonous in material? But you don't have to go nuts- a little bit is a little bit

Your brain tells you that the wood is one warm color or another, but if you were to take color samples off this pic and paste them in a white background, they would all be dark intense blue. I guess the point I am making over and over in this ramble is colors and values are relative, not absolute.

One other point, movie lighting at night is done with arc lights, and they are very blue. It is unmistakable. That is one reason I went with the cold blue lighting. I like cinematography a lot. The painting could have been just as successful with a warm or neutral palette. The other reason is what i hinted at above, wet damp sea air.

Muzman, you are right. If you have dark wood and a bright white shirt, what is going to be a higher value in the painting? I got the trunk down below correct, but not studmuffin's shirt. Umm, yeah, I meant to do that, I am an artist after all.... Really, I got bored and did not want to be responsible for the shapes in he shirt, as I don't know what that costume looks like off the top of my head. If

you don't know what the form is, you can't paint it. Yes, I was too lazy to waddle my fat ass to a search engine and type in "pirate."

So if you are going to fake it, keep it dark. Best trick of the day.

Shadows- The astronauts on the moon had trouble walking away from the sun, as the shadows they cast were black. Not light, no color. On Earth, the hemisphere of the sky is a very bright diffuse source that fills shadows from sunlight. So both by actual (the water in air thing again) and by simultaneous contrast, light and shadow tend to be compliments. Warm light, cool shadow, cool light, warm shadow. I think people are exposed more to the warm light cool shadow model more than the opposite. The cool light warm shadow is a simultaneous contrast effect. That is the classic lighting- warm key at high 45 and a cool fill behind.

AliasMoze, glad you like it. I block it in solid at first. Get as close as you can fast. Glaze and fiddle later.

Yes, the cloud near the horizon is out. Try this, draw your clouds, just an outline, nothing fancy, in plan view. Project that onto a plane in your favorite 3-d package. Let the map repeat. See what happens to the shapes? Near the horizon things are seen from the side on more than the bottom. They are also smaller. Well, a bunch of stuff happens, but you will see.

Jeez, just a sec..

Here. Too many clouds, but you get the idea. Think about clouds as if they were real objects (they are) and what they look like in plan and side view, and how they area spaced. Whatever type of sky you are painting, it always helps.

Did those pages with the generic reflection stuff help? Applying general stuff lke that to a particular image takes time.

With something as common as a spoon, make a straight line for the kitchen...

In general, reflective stuff has a lot of contrast, fast jumps between dark and light. No surface is totally matte or totally reflective, but some are close. A spoon might have a diffuse quality if it has been used. I know this is a little general to be of use, but I will be getting into this stuff in my column on 3dpalette.

Clay,

I suggest making both hard and soft brushes in one pixel increments up to whatever size you want. A few custom brushes thrown in...

This is a problem that I am very familiar with. I remember when I was in a basic design class we had to paint using gouache. I cursed the stuff to the ends of the earth and cursed the sadistic teacher who forced this arcane, useless crap on us. I had art to make, not swatches, dammit!

I saw an original exhibition of Syd Mead's work, and when I found it was all gouache, it put my art student brain back where it should have been.

I spent the next 3 years convinced that there was some trick to using that stuff, and eventually I found there was no trick at all. Ask all you want about technique, many are glad to answer, but realize that it probably won't help. Learning value and structure better, that will help.

Don't worry about technique, it will take care of itself.

Another point- Micke says his technique always changes- mine does as well. It is not a narrowing of approaches until- goldmine!- I have a trick that works! As you work for years, your basic knowledge expands so that any technique works, and you can use any path you want to get to new places that you have not been before. So my point is learning a technique is very limiting.

This is what makes a "loose" style work- you know what is important, and throw out the rest. Simplification and design of shapes.

I don't mean to pick on you or lecture either, these are just a few thoughts I had. maybe I write more in Immi's column.

Oh here's my brushes

There is a large coffee table book out now about 19th century artists and the exploration of camera usage. I can't find a link to it; I don't even know how to search on such a strange topic.

Of course they mostly took their own photo reference and changed it quite a bit. Eakins was the most literal, but then he was very mechanical in process. I have seen photos by Sargent, Mucha, Waterhouse that were worked from to produce artwork. So if these guys meet the criteria for real artists, then real artist "cheat," I guess.

I think those who duplicate photos are pretty early in their artistic development. It is a great thrill to control one's media finally, and duplicating a photo is a good test of this. But where do you go from here?

The art comes in what you include and exclude, what you exaggerate and what you leave out. It takes years.

Drew Struzan is a poster artist who uses a Lucidagraph to trace photos and paint and draw from that. I find his work amazing; I can tell his drawing ability is awesome. He could draw them freehand if he so chose, but he is a commercial artist, and time is money. What I like about his work is the art, his decisions about what to do with the material.

Don't be fooled by technique-it is so easy to be caught in that trap. I cringe when a well meaning person say "looks just like a photograph." Anyone can learn in short order to copy shape for shape.

My training as an Industrial designer taught me to render realistically what does not exist, by learning general principles of perspective, value and structure. It has been a really fun technical challenge to try to make the unreal real. I use photos all the time, but not to copy from, but to analyze and to derive general rules of appearance from.

Exposure latitude is one of many dead giveaways that a photo was copied. Unless you learn more about photography and its limitations you won't even know how it is limiting you.

If your work was highly original, I would say something different. Since you asked me, I assume you like my/dhab's approach. If this is true, leave the computer alone for a while. Get a 100 page sketchbook and carry it with you everywhere. Keep the pencil on the page as much as you can.

"I was going to take this in a little different direction than Fred did. Each step (I imagine about 10) would be spaces out a week, and likeness and finish would not be considered. I would start out slow, and with so much time in between steps, everyone could ponder exactly the reason why things happen the way they do. I would also write a bit about what I am doing. I think Fred's first step would be about #3 in my thinking.

I also would not pretend to be able to teach Fred anything, not the other advanced artists here. I have not posted much for the beginners here because it is overwhelming once you think about how much must be explained. So that was the point behind this exercise. Really slow, really basic, plenty of time for discussion.

This is my backyard after a long rain. The original is about 20"x15". Done from life. Olive trees are really interesting to paint. They range of greyed out greens is amazing, and the shapes are very ornamental. I didn't have time to play up that aspect of them here.

Fred, yes, I was graduated from AC in 91 (I have noticed you are not impressed with AC, neither am I at this point) so I did quite a bit of real painting before pixels, including matte work. I just got in under the wire. If I had started now, I would have been seduced by the dark side and would not have as strong a foundation as I would like. (still don't)

Yes, I use photos in a lot of my digital stuff. When I started out with it in about 95, I nor anyone else had a clue about how to paint with it. The work was basically compositing. As I learned, I painted more and more. Now, I use photos

a lot more selectively, sometimes as time saver I will retouch a sky for a matte shot, but still a photo sky might have 10 different photos with a lot of painting in it. I sometimes use a photo that has been stamped around to make an unrecognizable texture to start a painting. Canson paper.

Sam,

Too much scribbling, too much texture everywhere. Think simple at first. Take these flat shapes, sample color from them, bump the value one way or another and then be loose. I hope I am not confusing you. Be loose, be flat, blah blah.

Maybe I should say it this way.

REmember your basic design class? There was probably a lot of excercises that taught about contrasts. There are MANY type of contrasts, value, color, line weight, the list is very long. The point is the eye likes to be entertained by contrasts. Short attention span, the eye. Contrast also can work in really weird ways that you would least expect it. The pic I did before had a lot of "looseness" to it. BUT it also had some very precise aspects to it, some very soft edges, some razor sharp edges. Contrast. The contrast between flat and texture. Draw a rectangular marquee on a blank PS file. Take a texture brush and paint all around it, going right under the edges. Why is this cool looking? The precision of the square contrasts with the randomness of the brush stroke. I think your work needs more of these contrasts. REndeR some areas, leave others alone. Some bright colors, some flat.

man, I am really not being clear here, sorry. It is tough stuff to try an explain. Took me years to figure it out for myself.

When people here post art for critique, I have seen the same mistakes made over and over. No BG, too much contrast, light and shade confused, etc.

What I propse is to do a painting, from the start, on the boards. I will post a photo of a head that we will be working from, and then post each step.

Whoever wants to can then copy each step and post it in the same thread. I imagine about 5-10 steps in weekly intervals.

I learned so much from copying. It is really useful. After you do this, try another head that is similar, but a little different. Kinda like changing one variable at a time.

Samdragon, work the whole piece as one, the BG and figure are not separate things at all. That is a problem in the long run with being too rigid with basics sometimes. "I must know the physical form of what I am drawing. It is a cylinder. Therefore, I will extricate my ellipse guides from the bookshelf and proceed to properly construct my cylinder..." You get the idea. At some point you have to let go a little and let the piece talk back to you, maybe it's neat if you play up the flatness of something somewhere (I sure did here). I remember the hand of that guy in the graveyard with the gun (micke's fine stuff), posted here. The shapes in the hand were purposefully screwed up, elongated.

I am not here to confuse anyone, and if your basics are not solid, go back to them and forget what I have said until later. You can screw yourself up bad. But at some point, the work has to stop looking academic.

Are you working from some reference? I think you are not to the point where you can do this stuff from your head. Get a digital camera, they are so cheap now, even one that will do 640/480. have someone take a few (many?) pics of you or someone else. It is good that you have gone this far out of your head, so you will look at the photos and *slap* your forehead.

Now the next step, don't let the reference rule you. Paint, be loose, let stuff happen, allow the image to suggest things. use the reference to help with more specific form where and if you need it.

Some of the artists who found their way into the sketch I did:

Robert Heindel, Bill Sienkiewicz, Bart Forbes, Bob Peak, Drew Struzan, Syd Mead

But as I have said before, don't look at these guys stuff too hard before you have a solid foundation. Look at the old masters. Their approach to form is a lot more basic, easier to understand.

Illustrators play a lot with shape design and like to flatten out the picture plane (I did here) and it just gets confusing at first.

They look fine! Keep on doing them, and then do some more.

While you are looking at the source material, try to think what causes a particular color or value or edge. Really wrap your mind around the 3-d shape of the object.

I think they will come and lock me away for saying this, but whenever I have a few moments to spare, waiting in line somewhere for example, I will look around me at some effect of light or the shape of something. I try and analyse what caused it. If I were painting this out of my head, would I have reasoned through well enough to have included it? usually not, so I file it away in my brain.

Really look long and hard. That is one of the first rules of figure drawing and painting. Lotsa lookin, lotsa thinking, little scratching.

Look at the photo of the road. What aspects could you have exaggerated to make your sketch more accurate/forceful/etc? For example, near and far area treated the same. Does the stripe disappear eventually?

Sometimes it is nice to try a sketch from your head and try to get as much out of your current understanding as possible and then look at a photo and go "damn" You will learn the lesson better.

The traditional way for people to be taught how to paint was to think in planes and shapes. Gouache is good for this. From a description of the methods employed in the atelier that instructed Sargent:

"No brushing of the edge of the hair into the face was permitted, no conventional bounding of the eyes and features with lines that might deceive the student by their expression into the belief that false structure was truthful."

The illustrators of this century loved gouache and handled it in this way. Some even liked gouache over oil for finished work.

If I can put it well, it is the 99.99 %universal tendency of a beginning painter to blend too much, because it hides lack of structural knowledge and knowledge of value on that structure. (Example, the side of the nose is here and bounds the top plane here, the cast shadow from the nose is sharper than the form shadow...) Just smudge it together in one big inoffensive mass. It is not a good way to start.

This is a very academic approach, but if you find yourself needing those skills at some point, you ignore it at your own peril.

Also I have found that blenders (my experience with blenders is mostly from airbrush artists) are fooled into think they are far more advanced than they really are because their work has a 'finish" to it. They then stop learning as quickly. It's too bad.

The worst thing an artist can do is believe they know more than they do. Pure death. I include myself in this absolutely. There was another thread about basics where i said the same thing. There is so much about my work that nauseates me, and I am glad it does. Learning is more fun than just doing.

Jeez, I never thought I would see the day when someone wanted to draw like me. I used to curl up with a book or two of a variety of artists and get really intimidated. How the hell do they do that? I could not even copy it, much less do it from scratch.

If you want to be an illustrator, you must learn form and drawing. Unless you

want to be a fine art- illustrator, then you will be unemployed.

If you want to be an artist, be careful of submitting to too much instruction. It will affect you.

In western art, originality has become more and more important. In other places and times, it has been a curse. What do you like? If you like the usual suspects, you know what you must learn. If you like concepts, I don't know what to tell you. Go and do it.

I have said I like Synj's work. I think we will be hearing more about him in the future. He has a talent, a judgement that cannot be taught. Luckily, he is technically disciplined, so his ideas are realized. I, on the other hand, am a technician, what I do can be taught, it is a skill. That may be hard to understand, but if you give me enough time, I can tell you exactly what I do.

Maybe that is the difference between artist and illustrator. Maybe i am full of it.

So I guess my thought is if you want to be an artist, careful on the influence and hero worship. But to an illustrator, these things are a lot more useful.

Oh, no Fred, I really appreciate what you said. Some others said I was evil or something. I don't understand.

Yeah, the number of things whacked in my drawing... Please feel free to show me what you had in mind with the sternomastoid. I don't think a cast shadow is called for given the lighting. I wanted a point source from the viewer. We are seeing the bottom plane of the jaw head on. Umm I got it... The cylinder of the neck is not indicated-no wrap off in value.

I am not sure what prompted me to start using other than the default brushes (which I use a lot). I find fighting the slickness and mechanical nature of the digital tools calls for some ingenuity sometimes.

Orenzo, I used to start with a scanned pencil sketch, but now for something like this I just paint it. The endless workability of pixels is great, and it just gets richer as you correct something. Always be painting your figure and ground at the same time.

The values are something that I have always had. I could always just do it. I have learned what I am doing by analysis, because you have to be quite reliable to do things professionally. All the other stuff I have had to struggle with. I think shape design is still my weakest area.

If you want learn to show form with value, do basic shapes. It's the best way that will give you a lot of freedom later on.

Doc, yes I like John Berkey, but not as much as you might think. Come to think of it, I would have done well to study his work more carefully, as his shape sense is really amazing.

Rinaldo, I remember when I was painting with acrylics and gouache and would do a neat little sketch. Then time to do the full size finish. It is tough, like copying splatter patterns. I found in the end that it took a lot of doing to get the confidence to be as free with "finished" work as the sketch. But with digital, the challenge is less. You can do anything with no risk! That's why I bought a computer in the first place.

Frost, I have seen your stuff and I like it a lot, and as you area more advanced than some, I always thought you would figure things out for yourself soon enough. I will look more carefully and give you some more pointed feedback if you want.

Kain, I don't use the smudge tool much. Almost never on the color channels, as it destroys edge details. I use it more when painting on masks.

Joachim, yes, this was the first and only pic I did. The plug got pulled. Working remotely is a problem, you either come up with something totally new and original, or you go over territory explored and discarded three months ago. But I would have liked to try some others.

Aliasmoze, That is exactly what I am talking about. Solve the problem, cool!, let's move on. I think the trend will continue. I am always playing tricks with myself to make my ass stay in the chair.

I agree with Fred. One of the complications of traditional media is build up. Paint/charcoal/whatever feels different as the layers get thicker. Having a nice line drawing that has your shapes worked out makes sense here. I liked gouache, which if you handle it properly, gets richer the thicker you go. I can see that you are accomplished with the watercolor, so you must be quite used to working out things beforehand.

One of the great strengths of digital is no media build up. Put out a shape, cut it back, refine it, endlessly. Use that advantage because there are so many disadvantages.

When I started digital, there were no wacoms that I could afford (and we liked it!), so I adapted the gouache technique to take advantage of what I could and minimize what I was giving up. I did not use a wacom for a long time because of what Fred mentioned. It seemed to be a half baked transitional tool to make going digital a little more comfortable. I can see liking a tablet if you express well with line.

I think using the mouse made me a better painter. I had to concentrate on major masses and getting the big picture right as opposed to rendering with a thousand tiny strokes. This is called "licking" and can be seen from 4 miles away.

Is there anyone out there who can do a semi passable drawing with a wacom? I can't, but then my linework on paper is pretty ugly. I run to the paper sometimes to work out something tricky, but that's about it. I learned to draw with shape, as probably a painter should. Another case of the media leaving it's mark on the artist.

Yes, I use masks all the time in PS

Let me just crack my knuckles here and we will begin.

This will be my last crit before I go to away for a while. i will try yo post, but I

am not sure if I will be able.

Thanks to Francis for helping me out with the cast shadow info. Francis, could you do some shadow casting across objects? Stairs are a good example.

I am doing this til fred can take over again.

A few notes on where all this is headed. The assignments will gradually add one or two variables as each is mastered. The next drawing will be 2 matte cubes, one white, one black, on a white surface. Same idea, just black cube. It is tougher than you think. Then we do cylinders, then spheres. Once you are very comfortable with all this, then we start making something by combining these objects. When i had this class, we did a childs pull toy. Simple objects combined, with the start of a simple texture. later we introduce color, reflection, atmospheric perspective, etc. Each one of these variable must be isolated and studied, you can't do it all at once. That is why I get after you when you go ahead. I have not seen the two white cubes exercise done without error yet, so why are you moving ahead. I challenge you- it is so simple no? Take the coin from my hand... just kidding. If you can't get this correct, once we begin adding variables, you will be lost. Gotta get these basics right.

I reccommend getting a roman head, you know one of those all white things? Look at how light reacts on the simple forms we are playing with here, then look at the head. Do you see the nose is like a box, just squashed with a cylinder on top? The basic head is a sphere. Look at how the halftones on the top of the head (assuming top lighting) are brighter than the same on the chin. The head rolls away from the light, so even if the chin is still lit, it is a little darker. Do you see the cast shadow from the nose across the cheek? It is darker, just like the cast shadow from the cubes.

Onto the bloodletting

29a

Way too much contrast in lit side. Highly reflective material. Ambiguous surface local value. Core shadow should be farther to the right, and reversed in curve. No reflected light in shaded side of cube. Cast shadow of sphere out of perspective. Box is not a cube. If you were attempting lens distortion, don't- it just confusing. Sphere would also be distorted. No perspective on gradation of floor surface. If the lens is this wide, the far shadow edge should be

foreshortened. Soft shadow on cube, hard shadow on sphere.

See? Just do 2 cubes- much easier.

Nex- Verticals are not vertical, shadows black, no modeling of reflected light in shaded side of cubes, no halftone gradation in lit top of cubes. Cubes not sitting on same plane, as 29a points out correctly. Left face of right cube is in shadow, but is much too light for that. Appears to be halftone (halftone is what is in light that is not highlight) Try to keep shadow ends on paper, it is good info that will help viewer quickly tell what is going on.

Tanis I will just talk about top cube. Right VP is too close to center of vision. Shadow is missing edge cast from top edge of cube. Not enough separation of value from top lit surface to vertical shaded surface. No modeling of halftones in lit vertical face. Linework AUUUGHH! Use values, not line. Draw your construction first(with line) and then place your drawing paper over that. Trace it. Do it by eye later, but now, just get it right so your eye learns.

MOO- Not cubes at all. Also, I never made it clear, both cubes are of the same size. Far cube is much bigger than front one. Unfortunate choice of lighting direction- light is tangent to a face, making it in neither light or shade. Much better and faster read arrange light so all faces fall in one or another. Reversed halftone gradation on left cube, should be lighter farther away, darker closer (further from light). Shadows not from same source. Good separation of light and dark, though, with exception noted above.

Binke Cube out of convergence, not a cube (left side too long) Shadow from sphere should be underneath sphere a little. Shadows appear to be from different light sources (they go in different directions) Good basic values on cube. Called good 1-2-3, or lit, halftone, shaded. Could exaggerate reflected light in shade of cube, esp with light bounce from close sphere. values on sphere too dark. Grey shape, not white. Core shadow wrapped too far around object for side light. Go darker right underneath sphere, where it sits on ground, because the sphere itself shades the surface that it sits on from diffuse ambient light (the light that prevents the shadows from going black) No cheating by running shadows off paper. Let's see them. Oddly composed. Have

a nice day, Binke sorry.

Darkmoon- similar comments on the lighting direction as MOO. Yours, however, is in shadow, so its better. Should be getting more reflected light on

left shaded side of cube, cause the bright surface is very close and has little shadow. Could use more reflected light in right shaded side too. Loosing edge of top left edge. Slight tone behind to fix that. Shadow of top left edge is way out of perspective. This may help

Samdragon Same problem with tangent shadows. Muddled values from light to shade, very gray cubes, dude. Actually gray cubes with white tops. Bottom cube is not a cube, too deep. Shadow darker than shaded vertical sides. Too dark on surface, loosing light and shade feel. Right bottom edge of right cube converging too quickly. Keep at it, this is a good exercise for you.

Plop, your image is a white box with a little red x. Can't say to much

Sydneyshan. EL too low to have 3rd VP. Right side of right cube way too dark. Shadows black. Is right faces of cubes in light or shadow? Surface appears grey. If right face of big cube is in shadow, no reflected light. Shadow edges loosing shape. Tighten up to give more info. Light direction as indicated by cast shadow shows light to be more from top than very dark top surfaces would indicate. Again, too dark in the halftones, making things look shiny. Keep at it, mate!

Humanclay,

Not matte surfaces, core shadow looks like reflection of something dark. Very little modeling of shaded side and halftones does not describe form, looks flat. Cast shadow on sphere and cone from two different sources. Ellipse of cylinder on top is too open. Same as bottom, perspective drawing, not isometric. Lit side very blown out, no form. Top of cylinder same value as side. Is the light more from top or side? make it one so you can show that turn of form. Good chance for relected light from cone into shaded side of sphere not used.

It is the training of ID to make all things look shiny. Fight it, learn why things look shiny, or it will follow you around like big scarlet letters "ID GUY" I know, I was there. It is not bad if this is where you will spend your professional life, but gawd, it is so limiting. learn contol over contrast to make things shiny or matte at will, you will be a much more capable illustrator. End sermon.

Tzekin- Shadow too black, shaded side of cube too black, top surface should be halftone, to light, but it has a darker right edge, giving a rounded read. Lit face

is all one value. No convergence to right VP, looking like isometric drawing. You can use some tone behind the cube to show an edge. Try to not make the front face square to the picture plane (so that the top and bottom are parallel to the edge of the page). this flattens things out a bit. Read the above info on how to cast shadows correctly.

Sumaleth cast and object shadows too similar, losing the edges. Too light on left shadow area of cone. Too dark overall, objects are grey. Core shadow too far to left on sphere. No halftone modeling in halftones on sphere, looks flat. Too much contrast on top of cylinder, looks rounded. Might want to reverse the figure-ground values on cube, surface darker, object lighter. Contrast ratio is good, as in pretty slight.

Nex, dizzogg aliasmoze, I will have to get to you later, out of time

I just looked at my cubes again. many errors, my eye has sharpened back up doing these crits. There is no end to the number of errors you can make with this simple exercise.

I hope you see how important I think this stuff is by the time I spend criting the work. you are not wasting time and effort by doing it.

If you think you are beyond it, do this exercise for me. With the same setup as these cubes (white surface, single point source, etc.) draw and render me a little red wagon. Yeah, those little things kids ride around in. Post it and I will crit it. I will even do the exercise myself if there is interest. but this is only if you think cubes are beneath you. i recommend sticking to the plan that we are following, one variable at a time. If you screw it up, will you go back and do the cubes? Please?

Warning, there is harshness below, just a warning. And I could go on. Boot camp time. I care enough to give you hell

Nori, no linework. The worst insult i can muster is "linedrawer" Stick to cubes at first. We will get to cylinders and cones later. Choose a different light source for your cube, the above light source is confusing and does not give you the best sense of form. The traditional lighting direction is from 45 degrees up and somewhat perpendicular to the line of vision. Include your cast shadow.

Affected. Third VP is confusing. Be more precise with your values. You are going to dark in the halftones of the lit side, causing your forms to feel reflective. The dark tone on the receding plane of the cube is a good example of this. Core shadows are too dark, this also adds to the feeling of reflectivity. To get this much vertical convergence, you need to be looking further off the horizon. But don't worry about this yet, use simpler perspective.

Nori version 2

Try to make objects sit on same plane and inhabit same space, you will have to work and think harder to do this. Shadows not black. Darker than reflected light, but not black, to simulate some atmospheric or bounce. Values are 0-highlights 1-3 halftones, 6-7reflected light area, 8 core shadow and cast shadow. Notice that all shadows would be the same without reflected light! REflected and ambient fill are what prevent shadows from being flat black.

Plop, No refected light in shadow of cube, no modeling of half tones in cylinder. Be more precise in modeling your forms. Good value releationship between light, shade, cast shadow. Ellipse of shpere shadow too open, also not sharing same light source as others. The angle of light is different. Clean up eelipse on bottom of cone. Wait, only cubes at this point, that's right.

Frost, Just matte cubes for right now. Cast shadow of cube darker than shaded side of cube. halftone of sphere is flat, no wrap to form, too dark to be white. Cast shadow from foreground sphere should be slightly more open than shadow from larger sphere. Otherwise, shadows well constructured. Lack of reflected light on fg sphere.

If you guys want a specific assignment; Two matte finished white cubes sitting on the same white endless matte plane. Show planes with value, no linework. Two point perspective. MATTE Finish. Sunlight as source. The big idea is to use value to show form. No details, fancy perspective, cool materials, multiple light sources, radio aerials, etc. You have to entertain the eye by the simplest of

means. Once you get good at this, the other stuff will look a lot better.

here is an example

Fancy edges of cast shadow, no good. Too much variation in cast shadow values. Bad modeling of back cube- not sitting on flat surface cleanly. Light source should be higher, making lighter halftone on top surface. Cubes look a little gray.

sharpens the axe

The point behind this exercise is to be very aware with the two most important aspects of a rendering, drawing and value, in that order. In this particular instance, resist temptation to vary from the assignment. As I said, no crutches to make your pic "more interesting." Limit yourself to just value and drawing and the simplest forms and lighting and surfaces for now. You have to isolate these vital things and make sure you understand them.

If there are departures in my crits from what light would actually do, I have a good reason for doing so, and it is to increase the clarity of the forms expressed. a good example is the slight darker tone behind one of my cubes to create an edge to bring it out slightly. I might also ignore some esoteric effect because it is confusing. It is not a good idea to allow your forms to cross the eye level, for example. Less clear as a quick read.

Fred, that line is interesting. It is not a line in the traditional sense, but a cast shadow from the tiny radius on the edge of the cube. I was taught this way, so i follow it. If you don't use this, how do you show the turn of that surface? Gotta change value somewhere. In other disciplines (like head drawing) you are taught that every object has a thickness, and even a radius where the form

turns. It is a minor point, and I remember debating it with my instructors and losing

Frost, my cubes are done in PS only. I used masks for the shapes. The softening of the cast shadow edge is refraction, you see how the farther the cast shadow edge from the edge that creates it, the softer the edge is. This is a function of how diffuse the light source is, but also a characteristic of light going through or around an edge. I don't remember my physics too well, but I think it has to do with the wave-like properties of light. But it does help identify the shape as a cast shadow, and helps the reader of the forms, so it is included.

Later, when we get into cast and form shadows as applied to figure drawing, we will play up the SHARPNESS of cast shadow edges. A contradiction? No, just a play on the relative hardness of cast and form shadows. Right now, the cast shadows get softer in the described way to contrast with the sharper edges of the cubes. They describe each other through their difference.

Also in my assignment, I said use natural light. You can use either. I used artificial in mine.

Roll your own, or go to the cube farm.

A couple of definitions:

Forms- the 3-d objects that you are trying to describe on a flat surface

Shapes- 2-d areas that attempt to increase the feeling of 3-d form.

These two terms mean something different, and I use them precisely

On to the paddlin'

women and children leave the room

Plop

Two different eye levels, or cube not sitting on surface normally. Chose different direction for light source. It is tangent to a face of the cubes, leaving one face either in light or dark. Ambiguous. NG. Left cube is not a cube, too deep. Right VP is not followed in two back cubes. Be more precise in your construction. If you cannot eyeball these things correctly yet, as you will eventually, plot them out so your eye learns what is correct. Won't worry about values yet. Get drawing right.

Oh what the hell. Separation between lit and shade not enough to dark in lit halftones. Top of right cube is too bright in relation to the tops of the other two. Shaded side should go darker

Ahhh linedrawer!!!! get it away!!! Use VALUE to show form, not line.

Nex, don't use linework, the values are imprecise as is the drawing. Shadows stand up on surface, use different EL from objects. Ellipse of bottle too open. Just cubes for now.

Klaivu, Gray objects, values too dark overall. No texture, just matte forms, please. Cube is out of convergence, shadow side of cube darker than cast shadow. Use one light source. Missing shadow edge from top edge of cube. No reflected light into shaded vertical sides.

Darkmoon-

Grey cubes on white surface. Make cubes white. You can use tones in the background. No cones or spheres yet. No reflected light in shaded side. Need slight gradation in lit sides to show light direction. Too dark in halftones on sphere. No lines! tone behind will help with that. Verticals are not vertical. Shadows not following perspective.

That's it for now

hey glad you like it J...

Thanks for the disney stuff. I have mine buried around here somewhere, and I won't get at it till i get back (early July)

Nex, paper quality is important. I think the Fred school uses newsprint, but they do not use additive and subtractive technique, as the paper would not stand for it. They like to emphasize control anyway, so newsprint is great for that. Please correct me Fred if I am mistaken.

I would try any good quality cotton paper or vellum. Try using a razor blade to scrape some charcoal onto some paper(or just grind it on the paper) and use kleenex folded up to dab into it just like paint. If you really want a smooth buildup, mix a little baby powder in with the charcoal. It will not affect the value. Once you have spread this around, you may notice the grain of the paper has filled with charcoal and will not accept any more. use a LITTLE spray fix, outside only. This give the paper some tooth back and allows you to buld up a little more value. You can repeat this process until the paper is black, and control it all the way. That is the technique you see in those ACCD car drawings. markers and chalk. Yu can also do your drawing, fix it, and then put on some tone, so your drawing does not get smudged away. At each step, however, if you have some lights to pick out, you have to do this before you fix, cause you will have to realy grind it off once it is fixed.

On the above image, I did the drawing, if it can be called that, fixed it, put down one pass of powdered charcoal, then lifted my lights. I went darker with just a charcoal pencil.

Here's an example of this technique with a few extras thrown in. Just from my site, you might have seen it before.

Richard Schmid is an painter, does a technique-y (too much IMHO) paintings that look like Thomas Kinkade crap, but way better composed, drawn and painted. The book is well written and practical, I highly recommend it.

In the department of what-is-a-fundamental?, Schmid says he likes to "lock" one shape, and work out from there, a little at a time. This is totally different from the way most teachers would teach, and is

different from what one of his idols, Sargent, advocated.

Pretty different from what I was taught, as well. But I look at the work and I can see real advantages to working this way. Very interesting.

Hey Chumps, what got you down? Which class? I almost flunked out my first term there. Don't hold it against them, it's their job(!)

Looks cool Fred. Glad that shape thing helped out. One thing I might suggest is to still work with flat color and shapes, but make the value and color more accurate from the start. That way you will not fight that black and white and glazing will be much more effective.

Ahk, Get rid of the white, and have the confidence in your drawing to overlap shapes as you draw them. Those smudgy, hazy shapes do you know good. A confident strong shape is better than a tentative one, EVEN if it wrong!

One of the more widely accepted methods of determining the value of art is how influential it is to art done later. Also if the art exemplifies a culture or period in history it is remembered. That it may be intrinsically beautiful is seldom brought up. When people have different ideas, the more objective criteria must prevail. Beauty, as much as it may be relevant to you and I and our pursuit in art, is irrelevant to history. Ironic, eh.

I don't share the idea that the marketplace soils creative work. This has been the tradition for hundreds of years. The romantic ideal of starving artist living outside the corrupting influence of the philistine trader is a pretty recent idea. The renaissance artists all had patrons, and worked in essence as illustrators. Not to say they were happy about it, but the work endures(for whatever reason).

I really enjoy 20th century art. It has inspired me and influences my work

constantly. It has given me the freedom to see the process and culture of art a lot more clearly. There are charlatans to be sure, but there always have been. Their work is forgotten.

Lotor, don't expect others to agree with or subsidize what you feel is beautiful.

I know this may sound harsh, and I am not flaming you at all, I understand your frustration, but understanding how subjective reality can be is the most beautiful trip of all.

Probably it's a little weird having this coming from me, a very traditional illustrator, but that's the way I feel.

BTW, I am looking at a Cornwell poster right now on my wall. He is a god.

I think the silhouettes are very confusing; the shapes need work before you should worry about rendering it. As a logo it will be reproduced at all sizes so the shapes have to be very strong and quickly readable. The foreshortening of the head on top of the torso on top of the pelvis flattens out quite a bit. Maybe don't stack them up as neatly. The shadow from the left leg falls into the same path as the other leg. It took a triple take to see that it was a shadow and not the other leg. Don't think these are things that you can fix in rendering. If this was going to be an illustration, maybe if you were quite careful with values, but other than that, you have to fix it in your basic pose and shapes. Try a little wider lens, which would help some.

When it is better designed, you will see that it almost paints itself

B. G. I think your color comps are very nice I wonder if some of the color variation is from compression. That suggests an interesting idea . Paint something, and size it down to 100 pixels, and then size it back out That way you can see your foundation without the distracting details. Blurring just wipes

out your edges.

I did my knight guy pretty quick, about 30 min. There is a rhythm to the strokes that helps the feeling of action. It is interesting that you commented on the feet, J, because I was thinking that his right calf muscle must be detached cause his foot is on the ground. Should be on the ball of his foot. Try to almost put your knee on the ground and keep your foot flat. Ouch... I thought of his position like a ready position, staring the dragon down.

I didn't use any ref for this, that's why I made errors That and didn't think enough.

Rinaldo, I like the way you are thinking about things. I can see that the marvel way is getting a bit worn out.

The one thing I think is a little strange overall is the cropping of the dragon. Try to include more of him? The figure and ground relationship is not that dynamic. Two figures surrounded by a lot of space. In my sketch I tried to add some secondary interest all around because it is just sand. Just something to think about as you paint the final.

But in light of what I was agreeing with Rinaldo about, maybe don't take this advice. What I am enjoying in all this stuff is thinking about how to make it interesting, or in larger terms, what makes a picture interesting. How to solve the problems that the "marvel way" solved but in a different way.

But I understand that you are struggling with the basics and all this fancy stuff is not what you should be concerned about. So go with the marvel way for now but really think about how it works so it won't limit you later on.

Maybe the pose could be more dynamic like this. Grab a broomstick, go into the bathroom where there is a full length mirror and look at your pose. Be sure to lock the door. See the inclination of the torso forward? The legs are spread and knees bent.

I was looking at Fred's Darth Maul and was kinda interested also in lighting in

the desert. I have heard some say that the flat lighting of midday is boring, with no color. I kind of like it, the strong fill can really help out.

Bg, only thing I could suggest is looking at some images of dust that is backlit. If the sun is that strong, it will burn through it in a nice way, also throwing some subtle shadows on your subjects.

This is a good example of the difference between photography and painting and your eye.

Lets say this image is real and you are standing there

Photograph- either set your exposure for the background, in which case the subject goes black, or expose the subjects well and the bg blows out. The exposure latitude of film is a pain. We see so much photography that it leads us to believe that is the way we see.

Eyeballs- Your eye can expose the whole scene correctly. You would see into the shadows and bright areas and it would be filled with color and light. No black

Painting. This is one reason among many why it is important to paint from life at least sometime. Paint it the way your eye might see it, not the way a photo would butcher it. If your after a particular graphic effect, that's fine, but learn to assign values to the forms that are there, then you will have control, not just "I meant to do that."

So I guess what I am saying is careful with the heavy black silhouette. you can throw in a lot more color and form than you think, if you are careful and explore it a bit more. I will do a sketch if you do really not understand my rambling.

Wow, those are some nice images. I am assuming they are not contemporary? I am surprised I have never heard of them. The drawing look a lot like Henrich Kley. I admire line so much cause it is so far beyond me. Is Manchess contemporary? He looks Fixler-esque.

Here is what lies beneath the knight image. Do not distribute or I get whacked. It is one of many comps for a game box I had open when I came on the thread and I just thought the lighting would be interesting. Bright light, warm plane, dark, reflective armor. You can see the text that I did not blot out is " the tradition" Obi's head is definitely what you are talking about, stick it in and nudge. The knight is totally from scratch, however.

I am not taking any figure classes per se right now. I paint from the model, but no mentor. I do pour through every book I can, though. And I copy I lot, always have. Great way to learn.

I am interested in your positive response to Steve's ideas on drawing. I had a lot of the teachers he had and we were both given the same set of heros. Steve is a bit older than I and has always really concentrated on draughtmanship, where I went hopping from flower to flower. His knowledge and experience with the figure dwarfs mine. I could probably paint a car better. I think he did it right.

If I could put the difference in approaches in a nutshell, AC is more concerned with proper construction, whereas Fixler emphasizes shape and rendering. I cringe to look at a lot of the stuff presented in the Fixler way. It is so far out and nobody knows, it is all covered up with a lot of fancy shapes and arbitrary, supersaturated and tasteless color. I had a guy at the calabassas school tell me "artists" use "more color" and illustrators use "tone" Yech. A lot of it is kinda sofa size hotel-motel, \$39.95 this weekend only at the airport Hilton assembly line jerk offs.

God, that sounds harsh, but I really do appreciate the place and what I learned there, please don't get me wrong! There is Cretinism everywhere.

I am really glad I had exposure to both approaches, they complement one another very well once you are advanced enough to see how it all works. Maybe that is why you really liked Steve? I know when I first went to a fixler

school it was “ah, the other side of the planet”

I think you are at the point I am and we should go off and try to do the work and solve our own problems in our own way. Reverence for the past, as important as it is when you are beginning, can be a trap. I touched on this a little in another thread about modern art. You got the tools, you know how it all works...

I was going to comiccon, I could have met you there. I have to stay here and prepare for that damn speech next week. I am thinking of getting really sick next Friday.

My first head drawing teacher at AC was Steve. He had instant credibility. You would be sitting there suffering away and that huge arm would glide in front of your eyes and a deep voice would admonish some aspect of your drawing. Frightening. I took him again for some figure drawing. He's very good. I hear he gives classes at Disney now.

That's pretty nice ACCD would give you a full scholarship I have never heard of that. Half, maybe, but not full. Should have taken them up on it. They wanted to drum me out, much less give me money. It has been a long road I am a little miffed about having to go back there to speak.

I am surprised that the Fixler Way has found its way to San Diego. Is that where you learned? What was the path, who took it there? The old school in Topanga is now in thousand oaks.

You are trying to define a form from the edges, a difficult thing to do at first.

I would recommend working from the middle out.

Try this. Open a PS document, flat white about 1000 pixels to a side. Make FG

color white, BG black. Turn off opacity if you are using a pen. Start by drawing a black blob, maybe something that looks like a peanut. That is your torso and pelvis. Work from the center out, always feeling the weight and shape of what you are forming. Put a head on it. Look at it and see if it suggests a motion or something else.

Keep your mind open to letting the shape tell you what it is, like a writer whose characters suddenly start talking for themselves.

No shading, no gray at all. Keep your finger over the x key to toggle white and black to cut the shapes back and forth.

In long division you break the problem down into smaller and smaller parts until the parts are within your abilities. This is the same thing. No rendering, no value, color line, etc. Just shape, and the simplest and most important shape, the silhouette. Later you can refine it as much as you want and be explicit as you can with the construction.

sumthin' like this. It is like a golfer motion a little.

62 minutes, 48 seconds.

I needed that long to try what I wanted. The log sucks.

I like Fred's idea: lasso big areas and fill with color or grad. Paint away. If there is a lesson in these quickies, it is to get away from the problem we all see over and over of rendering before big shapes are in, or god forbid, the white of the canvas is still showing. That will do it.

Also, in a 1000*1000 image, start with a 200 pixel brush, see how far you can get.

Also, blur the image a lot, what do you see? Sharpen up a few edges that look sharp in your original. Just an idea, never done it.

MORE LOOKING, MORE THINKING, LESS PAINTING

I like Gouache

Use Windsor newton only. Maybe at first try only B+W to see if you like it to keep it cheaper? If you go with color, you can get around the metal pigments (cobalt, cadmium) there are substitutes. Just buy a warm and cool of each primary and a lighter and darker earth tone (dark yellows and reds). Only use permanent white! Zinc white is not nearly as opaque. Any black, or no black will do.

Brushes- just good watercolor brushes. Sable flats are good. Be sure to get yourself a windsor Newton series 7 #2 round ! A must have and there is no substitute.

Use double thick cold press illustration board.

If you want to rule lines, you can set a straight edge on a book and run the metal ferrule along it. Works nice. Gouache painters usually make their own out of plex.

Now the important part. USE PLENTY OF PAINT. Don't get cheap. PUT A STROKE DOWN AND LEAVE IT ALONE. Blending and feathering and fussing around are BAD. Not only will this look ugly because it destroys your shapes but the moisture and the abrasion will bring up the paint from underneath. If you ever had that problem of the paint coming up from below, this is the secret.

It is a very flexible medium, and can be used thin to thick, or a variety of ways, but this is the best way to start with. If you have enough paint on the board, you can soften and edge or two later.

It is a personal preference yah? To me the challenge is to keep the freshness and strength in a "finished" pic. Another cool trick is to get scared, incompetent art directors to accept this. Almost impossible, unless you have the credibility, then they can blame it on you.

But the basics are more important, and take much longer to master. House on crap smells like crap.

EVERYONE here should read these and be able to recite them from memory. I does not matter what your interest is.

Thanks to Glen for doing this and making it publicly available. I am going to read through them and copy each drawing. Might take a while.

I am not sure about me doing any more quick stuff. I am at a point now where I feel I should be moving very slowly, with great deliberation. Going fast reinforces all my bad habits/:

mind... Just a few things to add, hope you don't

On the lit side ear, I think the values are overstated. Set it up again and I would bet you that the shadow in your ear is not as dark or cool as say, your hair. The ear is thin, translucent and filled with blood, so you can play this up by going a little lighter and very warm with your dark accents.

The same is true for the nostril, to get the feeling of light coming through the side of the nose and bouncing around inside.

Same with and accent value on the lit side, also in the corner of the mouth. If you go to dark and cold in these spots it punches holes in the figure and makes them look dead.

Same idea in the mouth. One other idea on the mouth, the accent line is even in thickness, but it would be covered by the middle bulge of the upper lip. Sorry can't remember the 2 dollar word for it right now... This would add dimension to the mouth. I know you are so great with linework and love to play up the graphic (flat) in things, so I know you are between worlds here a little.

You might want to soften the edge of the hair/bg and hair/forehead in the shaded side a bit. Again, the power of shape or "painting". Hehe...

I am not sure I like the second version better than your start. The second one has a lot of noodling, but not any more accurate observation. I think the time that you spent on the second would have been better if you could take your first one and just make a little better choices, and made just a few corrections. On a 20 minute pose, spend 5 minutes just looking and thinking. It takes discipline, but the understanding you will gain will hopefully allow you to simplify and find the truth of what you are painting. I think finding ways of simplifying and designing is where you have come from with drawing, and you should continue it in your painting.

I guess this is a long way of saying I really dug your Bruce Lee Pic!!

One good way is to block in your painting with a gradation at first. You then have a nice palette to start, just pick up numbers from the grad.

I like HSB, as this color model is the easiest to apply to painting, and breaks color up in an understandable way.

Since you are relating all colors and values in an image to all the others, it makes sense to grab what is there and "nudge" it one way or another. As I have said many times, I like to start with an old painting that has been messed up or a photo that may have an interesting color relationship. The subject of this photo has nothing to do with the subject of the painting.

Get into the habit of characterizing every color you see. Describe it by asking yourself three questions 1)what color (hue) is it? (red, yellow, blue green, etc. Brown is not a color!) 2)Is it intense or dull? 3)How light or dark is it? Should sound like HSB...

Answer these three questions and you will be able to recreate the color later. I have seen sketches of Frederick Church with this type of notation.

Thinking in an organized way will help you troubleshoot things down the road. Ask yourself

Silhouette OK?

Drawing OK?

Values OK?

Color OK?

Hue OK?

The drawing is usually off 80 percent of the time, and the value is off 19 % and the other 1%, don't worry too much about. Of course, value and drawing are inseparable in painting. Is aspects of color, get the value right (the "b") and the other two will take care of themselves.

Looks accurate enough. Did you learn anything?

I think one of the points of this is working from life. As you did this from a photo, there are a lot of areas underexposed that just goes flat, like the keyboard. Photos just flatten out everything. Look at the real thing and really look at it. Let your eye see what is there. You will be amazed at what the camera leaves out. Later when you paint from your head (or photos) you will have this rich experience of what things really look like to draw from. You will be much further ahead. You can see and copy shapes really well at this point. This is your next step.

Try to set up some junk from your kitchen in a still life and paint that from life.

If you have any dolls or action figures, paint that. If the concept artists out there are listening, this is a great way to see what some of those "concept-like" forms really look like.

Hey there, I am breathing again.

Thanks to all those guys that came to the talk, it was very nice meeting all of you, now I have faces to attach to the nicks

I am sorry I left so soon, but both my wife and I are pretty much geeky homebodies who are uncomfortable in those kind of situations, and we had a long drive to get home. Not quite San Diego, but a ways.

I was really mad at myself for not preparing more effectively. I had a game plan, but I was really taken aback by the projection quality. It was a little frustrating. If I do this again, I will plan the presentation and make SLIDES with close-ups. Argh. People paid good money to see me crater.

I thought John Watkiss was really incredible. I just can't say enough good things about his work. The very example of going beyond technique. Also it drove home the point that at a high enough level, good drawing becomes almost a

caricature as it becomes more and more sophisticated in design. I am just glad he did not laugh at my stuff. It represents everything that he seems to have the utmost contempt for.

This art center thread is interesting. The tension between the need to know what has been discovered before and the need to invent the new has been going on forever. Different people have different views on the usefulness and dangers of either being hog tied by worship of the past and trying to re invent the wheel from scratch. How do you learn from the past and then not have it influence you? Yes, Art Center is an academic school (not as much as I would have hoped for at the time) but so is every other school that I have seen. That is the nature of a school. A set of principles. Even anarchists have chaos as a unifying theme. How heavily do you weigh originality in the value of art? We know where Synj is on this one. It is a very legitimate question, and one to which there is no right answer.

Below is something I wrote several days ago, and it touches on both the photo issue a little. My wife was mortified that I gave the impression that I am a photo collagist. Ack! As I said, when I first started with Photoshop, I did not know how to paint with it, and i did paste photos together, now I use destroyed photos and old paintings to start on. That is it in a nutshell.
posted July 21, 2000 02:35 AM

Here is what lies beneath the knight image. Do not distribute or I get whacked. It is one of many comps for a game box I had open when I came on the thread and I just thought the lighting would be interesting. Bright light, warm plane, dark, reflective armor. You can see the text that I did not blot out is " the tradition." Obi's head is definitely what you are talking about, stick it in and nudge. The knight is totally from scratch, however.

I am not taking any figure classes per se right now. I paint from the model, but no mentor. I do pour through every book I can, though. And I copy I lot, always have. Great way to learn.

I am interested in your positive response to Steve's ideas on drawing. I had a lot of the teachers he had and we were both given the same set of heroes. Steve is a bit older than I and has always really concentrated on draughtmanship, where I went hopping from flower to flower. His knowledge and experience with the figure dwarfs mine. I could probably paint a car better.

I think he did it right.

If I could put the difference in approaches simply, AC is more concerned with proper construction, whereas Fixler emphasizes shape and rendering. I cringe to look at a lot of the stuff presented in the Fixler way. It is so far out and nobody knows, it is all covered up with a lot of fancy shapes and arbitrary, supersaturated and tasteless color. I had a guy at the Calabasas school tell me "artists" use "more color" and illustrators use "tone" Yech. A lot of it is kinda sofa size hotel-motel, \$39.95 this weekend only at the airport Hilton assembly line jerk offs.

God, that sounds harsh, but I really do appreciate the place and what I learned there, please don't get me wrong! There is Cretinism everywhere.

I am really glad I had exposure to both approaches, they complement one another very well once you are advanced enough to see how it all works.

Maybe that is why you really liked Steve? I know when I first went to a fixler school it was "ah, the other side of the planet"

I think you are at the point I am and we should go off and try to do the work and solve our own problems in our own way. Reverence for the past, as important as it is when you are beginning, can be a trap. I touched on this a little in another thread about modern art. You got the tools, you know how it all works...

I was going to comiccon, I could have met you there. I have to stay here and prepare for that damn speech next week. I am thinking of getting really sick next Friday.

I hate to keep on posting this same thing, but it does give a very obvious step by step of this way of going about a painting.

http://www.goodbrush.com/public_ftp/forum/sink.mov

Maybe some have taken the black and white silhouette idea a little far. If you were to take your finished painting and gaussian blur it, what would it look like? I am not saying block in fuzzy, but what are the basic colors? Warm, cool, red, gray, light dark, what? The closer you block in your values and colors to what you think they will be in the end, the less work you have to do, and you don't have to "fight" and alien color or value.

So the silhouette technique works as long as there is some contrast between the figure and the ground. It could be very slight and still work. In fact, low contrast could help the shapes suggest more to you than if they are screaming black and white.

Hope this helps.

If you only have two, you have to simply decide where is the best place to go from light to shadow. Look at comic art, two values, good decisions and great shapes.

If you add a third value, add it to the lit side. In general keep the shadow side very low contrast and make your error in too little information. Make your lit side precise.

Hey, I am thinking of Florida as a place to live, spec. Sarasota/Bradenton. Is that where you are? You like?

PHOTOREF

I do have a lot to say on this subject because it is so misunderstood.

1)"If you trace it, it MUST be perfectly drawn with no mistakes." Nothing could be further from the truth. If you don't know how to draw, tracing won't help you. There is more to drawing than the accuracy of the silhouette.

2)"Using photography means duplicating it." Photos are used for so many things besides xeroxing them by hand. On one hand they can be used for information only. I have not been to the Taj Mahal, and verbal descriptions just

don't quite do it. Use photos. The matte departments I have been in have very large photo collection for just this purpose. I don't think many would disagree that this is a legit use of photography.

There are a lot of photographs that have had considerable time and expense and skill put into their creation. A good photographer does what an illustrator does in many respects. If you were to take that image and duplicate it, shape for shape, not only would it be pointless but illegal. At what point does it become an original work? How good is your lawyer?

I'll add more to this as it comes to mind.

Please chime in if you have anything to add. I know this subject has come up before, but it still is interesting to me.

, I guess I fall into the block it in first camp. The more you can simplify your image, or make it work with less detail, the more impact it will have. The "art" come from the basic design, not the picky details

One thing in general to keep in mind is in any picture there is a lightest light and you should limit your brightest value to that spot. What surface would be picking up the most light in this top lit head? Since skin is all the same local value and color, you don't have to worry about that complication. If you look at most heads from the side, you see that they are curved, meaning the planes of the chin and cheek and forehead are not all vertical. They "wrap" upwards as they go higher. So the forehead is facing the sky and receives more light. And there you have rationalized a criteria for making the forehead lighter than the cheeks.

You could make the nose your number one bright, as the nose and forehead often compete.

The same idea happens at the other end of the value scale.

If you put your brights all over, it gives the "blown out" look

One thing about art that really makes it different is the ability to judge someone entirely on the portfolio, and the quality of the portfolio is a direct indicator of your ability to do the job. In other areas you have grades and interviews, which are indirect indicators at best. They might measure brownnose ability as much as real ability.

It is not a perfect indicator, though. I have seen nice portfolios but the inability to complete a job. I have seen portfolios with cool rendering of water drops on coke cans, but, well, they can't do Pepsi cans.

So I think the school you go to should be judged on 1) emphasis on fundamental drawing and painting, 2) competence of these basic instructors and the ability to teach (talk to RECENT graduates) 3) flexibility to create your own program. Don't worry about the prestige of the school. Schools work on the "Halo" effect, meaning the real world doesn't find out they have gone downhill until 5 years after the damage has been done. That was true at ACCD. The illustration dept was gutted while I was there.

Please also consider Industrial Design. From looking at the work, I think a lot of the people here who are considering art careers would be better off in ID

One thing to think about is the value shift from light to shadow. If your white car goes from #1 in light to #4 in shadow, the shift is , hmmm, help me out here, uhhhh 4 minus 1... 3!!!!

So you see where I am going with this. Other local values should also shift by that amount. A black tire that is 7 in light should go very dark in shadow. There are always a million caveats, but sometimes it helps to think this way to give yourself a place to start.

Looking at your pic, I would say the cast shadow is a little strong. Look at the white car and the pavement, they are different values in light, as they should be in shade. It is not actually linear, but in a simple image it's best to think this way.

Hey Danny, that's pretty sweet!

I am not sure if I am qualified to critique your work, but maybe it is worth what you paid for it

Going with that much contrast in the face is a little dangerous cause she starts to look metallic. The value range and the color shift from dark/warm to light/cooler reinforce the metallic feel. It is not the actual color but the range of color. It could be contrasty on my monitor, but the value and color range in other parts looks very accurate.

I like the really crisp cast shadows. Are you going to do the lips the same way? Could do it in the hair as well, but a little softer.

beautiful shapes and rhythms...

Wheels out Soap Box. Clears Throat

This debate between "reference is cheating caus you just copy photos" and "how else ya gonna paint except copy em?" has and will be going on forever. In the interest of clearing up this debate, I was wondering if Danny could post his reference. If all concerned could see your source they would see how much design and shape conrol and editing and pushing forms and exaggeration and suppression really goes on in work at this level.

I LOVE Drew Struzans work. Does he use photos? Of course, he even projects them with a lucigraph. If I were given the same materials and asked to do what he does I would need Rumpelstiltskin to bail me out.

If you dismiss work because solely because it is photo derived, you are ignorant. If you dislike it cause it sucks for other reasons, well and good. There is a lot of work that is photo derived that I don't think much of.

Before Fallen left he was starting to do nice things with his reference. The profile of the lady with the spider was beautiful. I bet a slavish dup of a photo would not have produced it.

Sorry to put this in your thread, Danny, but I thought maybe you could help out here. If anyone wants to discuss it further, let's start a new thread.

ON TO PAGE 41!

"Decide what is in light and what is in shadow and don't mix them up. Think like a comic artist. Two values, but if they are well thought out and designed and drawn they can look totally real. Think like that, but instead of making the light white and the shadow black, make the light a 7 and the shadow a 3. Then go ahead and use 5-10 in the light and 1-3 in the shadow to pull out sub forms. DO NOT use 1-5 in any part of the light, or use 5-10 in any areas of the dark. Keep you edges a little softer in the shadows, a little sharper in the light, you are done. (0 is black, 10 is white) Deciding what is in shadow and light for a particular object is pretty hard in words. I will leave that up to you and that is 99 percent of the struggle."

I really don't know what good drawing is, I cannot define it absolutely. Traditionally, it is an academic idea, and the guys at art renewal would say that naturalism is good drawing. But there are people who have expanded the definition of what is good drawing. Take for instance Elliot's girl at the top of this page. It is excellent! Everyone seems to like it. All those French dudes draw like a fish swims. But the proportions are funny and the arm is too short and the head is strange and the hip is missing, etc. So in the eyes of an academic purist this is bad drawing. So I would say that drawing is as subjective as any aspect of art, and has more to do with the emotional expression of form. If it looks wrong to you, it is wrong... to you. There is an old painting I did of a gladiator crouching. I was very happy with the gesture of it. But so many people says it looks messed up to them. So who is right? If you go with the expanded idea of what drawing can be, to include more expressive ideas, it becomes very subjective.

But the art renewal people and dim witted people in general, think they know what good drawing/art is. Even by their own definitions, some of the "living masters" in their "approved" gallery don't know much, and it is pretty embarrassing in my eyes. I have watched them work first hand and listened to their narrations. I cannot prove that it is "bad," because I do believe in my own conviction about how subjective things are. I can only say that I get cross-eyed looking at some of them. And if academic skill is the only thing you are selling, it is grim.

So as far as worrying about anatomy in these speed things, that is an involved question. But to make it simpler, if there is something that bothers the viewer, it is wrong to them. Others could like it. But usually these images are thoughts that have one or two goals in mind, like lighting or composition or even anatomy (maybe pay more attention then). I guess the shortest answer I could give is spending enough thought so that it does not stick out painfully.

Flushy, I am going to say something pretty harsh, so the rest of you go away for a minute I am roughly 15 years older than you, and I see a lot of the same strengths and weaknesses in your work and mine. You and I have a good handle on setting up a solid value structure and then playing with paint and light effects to keep the eye entertained. But you, like me, need more drawing. I just started about 3-4 years ago.. Don't make the same mistakes I made, hiding behind piles of pretty paint, start now and learn more about drawing. Any painterly illustrative style depends on this more than anything. Your work

will be better, faster, more flexible, and more profitable. You will learn faster as time goes on and the emergence of your own artistic personality will be much stronger. I had a teacher at AC that said plainly that in all the students he had seen, income was based on the ability to draw more than any other factor.

But you protest “you just said you did not know what drawing is!” That’s right I don’t, but I think that it has something to do with your own personal understanding the form and structure of the things around us, and figuring out how to express that on a 2-d surface. And to further explain my obnoxious comments about academic artists above, be very very careful of whom you listen to, and that includes me. I have seen way too many young artists get caught in the academic thing and never emerge. I can see them sitting before the feet of the robed master, as he tells tales of the greatness that they should all strive for, to immolate themselves on the pyre of 19th century masters, there is only one true path and all else lead to the dark side. So try to find people you can learn from, but a variety, not one (or one institution) who claims to Know, and says if you don’t listen you are Damned.

I went to ACCD and took some classes at Art Institute of California. Both are wonderful in their own way, both take themselves way too seriously. But that could be for marketing purposes. Nobody likes a wishy washy. “Pay us 100 grand and we will give you a fragmented idea of what we think art might be partially about” Not very good. Lets just say they have started to believe their own PR.

I don’t think this will happen to you, you are a little older, and maybe have a stronger personality and could tell them to shove it.

If you find yourself on your own, go to museums often, carry a sketchbook at all times (and even draw in it) and draw from life as much as you can. Learn about art history too. Draw and think while you are drawing. Spending 2 hours filling a background behind a head drawing with a 4H pencil is not the best use of time. I said all this before.

Ok if I slobber this much I have to post something.

One intermediate step between tracing and drawing from life is a to use a grid. Just draw a grid over your original and on your canvas and look where

things line up. This is an ancient practice, and not cheating at all. It will not hide the fact that you can't draw, surprise, surprise. But it will help you get started and see what correct proportion feels like.

hey cool Gerbil, glad to hear what people think. That is one of the reasons I hang around here, to see what does and does not interest people. We are entertainers, no?

I was aware that I was freely interpreting western stuff and the cape came out of nowhere. No, wait, that is not a cape, those are body bags.

It is ironic, and is always the case. I do something that I finally see some value in, some redeeming quality and not everyone likes it. hehe. That is the way with my commercial crap, too. What I like or am pleased with gets me fired everytime.

There is something in that pic that I like. It kinda has the quality that I find in Mickes stuff sometimes, a faint exaggeration that I really like.

I am also aware that it is a little different for me in the loss of shadow detail. Don't usually do that.

A little history here, though. I went to school with Merg's boss (is that right?) and gave a short presentation to their studio. Merg mailed me later and asked for a crit of this cowboy pic, and I told him I would do it publicly here.

Merg, is there anything else I can help you with? Is that what you expected? Like I said, I could help more if I saw your reference. Without seeing it, I would say that there is too much contrast in the shadow areas of the face. That ear is being backlit, it has blood in it, make it warmer.

The radius on the gun stock is not uniform. Taper your highlight to show this. Need more differentiation of materials. Skin, metal, wood, leather, cloth. Play up differences between them in the light, but don't be afraid to lose edges in

shadows (like the face comment) Where light moves to shadow on the cape (poncho!) is a form shadow. Use a softer edge to show the form turning.

AS far as this being a "trick" that will seduce the weak minded, BAh, what ya gonna do? The Real Trick is... HOW LIGHT WORKS ON****INGBASICSHAPES!!!!!!

Oh, sorry, just a minute here...

The purpose is to get a more interesting surface, with more color variation, and sometimes to suggest a color or lighting direction that I might not have considered. Computers are mechanical beasts, and they do the same thing over and over, very fast. Look at a high contrast edge in a photo. There is tons of info there. Very complex in all areas, HS and B. Paint the same edge with a PS brush. The only variation is a mathematical decrease in value out from the center of the brush. Very one dimensional.

Bringing in some variation I think helps with this.

It is a minor point.

A lot of what you may think are photos are just custom brushes and a lot of glazing early in the picture. Look at that sink painting I did, and look at the step by step. You would have probably thought there was a photo under there as well?

only two things come to my mind,

one, you should play with atmospheric perspective vertically as well as z-depth (I used a techy term). Below is farther from us than straight ahead.

Two, the shapes in the rendering of your rocks does not change scale as you go further back.

Think more sculptural, like Lokis rocks, as opposed to flat shape with a few highlights.

The airship in bryce canyon, yeah that way!

Most of you guys have a big head start on me. I did a little, little bit in High School, but it never was much good, like "you should be an artist." The teachers hated it. I didn't take it back up till I was 23.

Time doing it, repetition, like scales in music, a steady pressure over the years, interests that does not diminish. These will get you there. I have the trouble liking too many things, even too many types of art that each could consume a lifetime.

I think I told the story of the giant pickup truck riding out the suspension filled with life drawings from school. Off to the dump. It shows how many drawings it takes. And I am by no means a good draughtsman. I know structure, but that is where it ends.

So keep on drawing and painting and thinking and learning. The most versatile and true talent is perseverance.

And I haven't gotten as far as I should. I have so far to go till I am where I would like to be.

Sumaleth, with this image I did have something specific in mind, those ordaz ptgs from ROTJ. Flat and graphic. The only information is the halftones in the reflections. Pretty neat. It is high contrast, you would see a lot more if you were standing there, but it does give the feeling of “new.”

If I were doing this for real, I would start over completely and make sure the drawing was VERY accurate. A sketch to show a director would look very much like this. I would do it at high rez, and be just as loose, but at a finer scale. See the metal tubing couplings on the floor? Instead of a single blob, I would paint it nice and loose, maybe a top plane, side plane and a few joinery lines. A shadow and your done.

this took about an hour. That’s all I can give to these sketches.

It is neat collaborating, because if you just work on your stuff, you might end up repeating yourself. This forces you to explore something different. I doubt anyone including Francis would say this is a highly original subject, but I did learn from it.

Danny, yeah, it’s pretty rough. To me God lives in the foundation, not the details. I just like to do enough to solve the problem, then move on. I get so freaking bored noodling. I really don’t know how you do it. I love it when it’s done, it’s a thing of beauty... but hire someone else to do it

With the FF stuff I am doing, I have to be very detail oriented. maybe that is why I am looser here.

Oh, almost all the rules you have heard about composition are total crap. Break them with great Joy.

I am quite the opposite. That king arthur thing I did was a drawing to start. Ugly.

There was something called an Asaro head years ago. A painter named John Asaro made these plastic heads that were life size and broken into planes. On half was more simplified. The important part is to flat shade things and keep the planes accurate with good definition between planes.

I would imagine that it would be possible to duplicate the thing in 3-d. A 3-d flat shading is pretty primitive, but it is a start.

Could one of the 3-d whizzzes do something like this? I bet it already exists somewhere. The important part is to flat shade things and keep the planes accurate with good definition between planes.

Aliasmoze, just stick to value right now. Color can come later. Try the head without the helmet and goggles.

Remember you can roll the lighting off as it gets farther from the source. With top lighting you can assign a lesser value to the chin than you do the brow, even though they may have similar angles to the light.

Play up the difference between core and cast shadows. They are your friend.

You have a good separation between light and dark, good start. If I see mistakes made over and over, it is that there is confusion between what is in light and shadow. Decide which and make that plane in one or the other.

The other really big problem I have seen is too much contrast WITHIN THE DARK OR THE LIGHT. I have talked about this before, but I am not sure if I was clear.

If you make your dark value a 3, and your light value a 7, good. Now how do you model form from there? By too much contrast I mean that the values stray too far from these basic values that you used to block in with.

Within the dark, stay very close, 2.5 to 3.5

You can go a little wider in the light, say 6 to 8.

The sin is to go up to a 5 in the shadow and down to a 5 in the light. MUD.

Another sin is the will to shininess. I know the feeling. You are working along on your head and you don't know how to make it better. So you start working up the highlights, even with that damn dodge tool. Highlights are seldom as bright as you think they are, and are a product of reflectivity. So once again, you have large value range in the light side. What is the symptom of this? Your forms look bulbous and roughly spherical. How many cheeks have you seen that look like chrome spheres? Stop the madness!

To sum up, you don't need a lot of value change to show form well. A good separation between light and dark, with good and accurate light and dark shapes, play up core and cast shadow edges, and you are almost there. If you get these right, you will be amazed how little "licking" is required.
and

Snake Grunger, the idea behind the dark skin is 1) old leathered guy; 2) this increases the apparent brightness of the reflective armor. Similar idea if you wanted to make someone's white clothing look their whitest. It is also kind of a camera trick, you expose the bright armor well and everything else goes dark, cause that is what it is in comparison to the bright stuff. The blood dripping is black, and we all know that blood is not black, but is dark enough that in this value system, it occupies a very dark place. More with that dark stuff....

I think what Rinaldo told you was too advanced. The drawing is not correct in either pic. That is the most important part. You have to fix that first.

Once you have your basics down, the technique I would suggest block in your basic values with flat color first. Then use a paintbrush at 2-3% opacity and model the forms veeeery slowly. This can be done with a mouse easily. Danny

may do things differently.

But again, technique is not your problem.

Hey Phreaknasty, I think some of your shapes are very strong. You have given great care to the shape of the hair, very important here.

It would be nice to see your reference before I say anything, but I will try.

If you are trying for a high contrast black and white image, my crit is as follows;

The texture in the shaded flesh is too active. The light is flat, as the shade should be. It looks like the photo was set up to expose the shadows and blow out the lights. That is fine, it is usually the other way around. With this type of image, you have your big shapes, and then the transition from light to dark. If it is black and white, there are a variety of fancy shapes that you can use to simulate the turning of form from light to shadow. Since you are using grey here, you don't need to worry about that. The transition from light to dark becomes very important, because there are no halftones in the lit side to show form. You have to imply your forms from the precision turning from light to dark. Case in point is the cheek. Top plane in light, side plane in shadow. You have to pay more attention to this area where it goes from light to shadow—that is where the eye candy and information is. As I said before, your big shapes are very good and are holding the pic together, but look really carefully at the edges of light to shadow transition.

If you are not going for the high contrast look, and want a more naturalistic distribution of values,

Think about the actual local value of the skin and hair and eyes. Hair is black, good, skin is dark gray. Hmmm. You have it set up as the lit side of the skin is the highest value. There should be a whole range of values within the lit side, not blown out white. The whites of the eyes are in light, yes? Shouldn't that be lighter than grey skin in light? This is the problem of working from photos. You

are limited, and unless you really know your stuff, you can't do much besides design and copy the shapes you see. I bet there is no halftone information in this photo. Working this way is fine for learning your media, but you would learn so much more by looking at a real black person! You could do a lot more with this photo then.

I know a lot of people think life drawing is an extravagance, and just working from photos will get you where you need to be, and no one will ever know the difference. I have made a mental note to try to explain in real terms the value of it, and here is one of so many examples.

getting the shapes and values correct is 90 % of it. The edges are a bit down on the priority list.

Copy some Sargent paintings. You have to look carefully, but there is a great hierachy of edges in his stuff.

In general, the higher contrast between two values, the sharper the edge. Another idea is if the edge is not important to describing something, lose it or soften it.

Hey glad you like it. It took about an hour. I really try to keep the sketches I do here to that length. It forces me to stay with what is important and to simplify.

I just noticed I left out the machine gun in the hull. And Tigers did not have driving lights. bad.

back from bookshelf Last night I was proud of my memory of the tank's anatomy. I wasn't even close. This pic could have been a lot nicer if I had taken a minute to check it out. That is just stupid. How often is there no ref, and then when there is, I am too lazy to use it. bad.

Craig,

I too love Tigger tanks, esp tiger 1. Very brutal looking thing.

I haven't tried to draw one since I was about 15(!) I was surprised how much I could remember. The forms are very simple.

I REALLY like you drawing, but not for the reasons you might imagine. It reminds me of a very well done pastel. The surface breathes and moves, with thick rich strathmore cotton paper showing through like wet nip... How old are you? never mind.

Your picture may flatten out a bit because of this, but I like that aspect. The stroke that does not follow the form and lays on the surface is really nice. It will be even better once you learn a little more about value and color, but that will come.

What I did was something for me as much as you, that is why I changed things around so much. Hope you don't mind. It is a little squashed intentionally. Just an experiment.

I think 36 is quite old enough

I hope to retire by 50. Then I paint what I want the way I want.

I had a teacher tell me that said income is directly related to ability to draw. I have found this to be true, once you throw out some other complicated issues, like laziness.

edit- Rinaldo, if you are there, you asked that I post full rez images of some stuff. i have in a few cases, but I really want to keep a grip on that stuff, as it may have value for a book or something. It is depressing to see the jpgs on my

site, they are pretty slim. And I think I have to go back and fix the mac/PC gamma problem, as 99 percent of the people surfing by are PC, and my crap is too dark as it is.

I am getting better at shape design, digital has helped me with this.

I have not drawn from the figure as much as i would have liked to over the years. i am fixing this now. From life do all blessings flow.

I need to learn anatomy as well as I know mechanical objects.

I get bored with a pic once the basic design problem is solved.

I get too fast from the top and my club gets outside the line and I will pull-hook under pressure. Wait...that's golf.

I don't answer my email. I feel very bad about that.

I however long it takes you you should get the drawing more correct. It is too far out right now. So the time you spent painting this would have been better spent drawing.

I think that the idea of doing something quickly is to nail the important stuff and let the other stuff slide. If it takes you longer to work out a particular problem of drawing, do it. I don't think you will get further down the road by coloring an incorrect drawing.

Sorry, hope you don't think I am fussing with you...

I know that a lot of jargon is thrown around about simplification and value and shapes, and I know that this may not be really clear to some.

Here is a hand that is part of that tank pic I reworked.

Form- the three-dimensional aspect of what is painted, giving the illusion of depth.

Shape- the two-dimensional aspect that (hopefully) indicates form

I am assuming that you know how to draw a hand....

The light source in this example, only one, is somewhat diffuse and from above. A point source would have strong cast shadows, and example would be the sun. A diffuse light has softer form and cast shadows, example being an overcast day. The difference is the size of the source. You can make a point source into a diffuse one by placing a sheet or diffuser over it.

ok...

Shape first! The hand is surrounded by material that is darker than skin, so I blocked in the outer shape of the hand first. Note the red outline. This value is flat and creates the shadow area of the hand as well as the silhouette. The two middle fingers are merged into one shape. You might think that since this is "sketchy" this shape might be loose or imprecise. Neither. Take the time to consider this shape. If you look at the shape you will see that it is very squared

off. See the ends of the fingers? The fingers taper out and are not round on the end. Don't be afraid to cut this shape back with the surrounding value; if you paint with the round paintbrush, your shapes will be rounded. Cut back into them when you need to. You see where I have simplified the edges of the shape into straighter lines than you might think.

With this done, you can actually light it in any direction. Where you place the lit values will show where the light is coming from, and define the top and side planes of the form. But as I said above, this is a top diffuse source. You don't need to do anything more with the shaded side-this is what I mean by too much activity or contrast in the shaded sides of forms. The information should be in the lit side, in your halftones working up to your lights.

Now select a lighter value- this will in this case show the tops of the forms of the hand. The palm is a large mass and facing up somewhat. Block in the top of the hand. I indicated the bones in the hand with a slightly lighter value. This is outlined in blue.

Since the base of the fingers is bent more horizontally, they catch more light. Block them in a little lighter. Keeping with the idea of the information in the light, the definition between the two middle fingers is made here, whereas in the shadow they were one shape. Note also that the middle and ring finger are pointed at us, so you don't see the side plane of the fingers. The index finger is turned away slightly, allowing a view of the side plane. Same with the thumb. This is indicated by placing the light shape to the side of the finger shape. This is an important general point: what makes it read is the information given through the careful thinking and painting, not through a lot of detail and rendering. This allows things to be simpler and have more impact. And once you get good at it, you can paint faster, too.

So to summarize, you have the silhouette, the flat shaded side that is one value, and a lighter value that on the top planes. If your shapes are well drawn, this is all the info you need to simply show form. The gray outline on the right show just the shapes involved. That should read fine.

The ends of the fingers bend around the form and fall into relative shadow. You don't need to do anymore here.

Do you see how this way of thinking about form would be greatly enhanced by knowledge of light on basic forms. That's why I push that stuff so much. It's not some blind academic knowledge, I use it everytime I pick up the brush.

More halftones, please...

Francis, yes, I can see exactly the size brush you used.

Try several different approaches in the same painting. The top image is crying for a few harder edges. paint a bit with the size option checked, so your stokes will have a taper. Play with variety in shapes.

Example, the fold in the elbow are all the same size. Vary that, and the stacking of the folds as they come closer, overlapping

I know it's a lot to think about, but you get better as you do more. Like playing a piano, try to do that by reasoning through every note

A further indulgence in movie photography. Ridley scott blue haze. The reference is from the crow movie. It is fun to pause the VCR and try to capture what you see before the tape breaks. Even though this very tied to the photography, I learned a lot about a different way of lighting the head, and can apply that knowledge to someting later out of my head.

I am not sure how much help I will be here.

The only thing I can relate is what I have done, and what worked for me, so don't take this a recommendation at all. It does contradict what has been successful for a lot of others.

I remember Bob Peak speaking at school and he thought a disheveled coffee stained portfolio showed experience, whereas a slick book showed "art school, just out of."

I present that thought at face value. Not a recommendation. Interesting, though.

When I was doing the rounds, I had up to a hundred pieces thrown in a beat up case. I have never matted or framed anything in my life, thank god. You can tell from my crappy web page I don't think much about presentation or marketing. When I brought 10-20 pieces, it did not work as well. With art, presentation is less important, because anyone can see your competence right away. Evaluating a systems analyst or something makes one rely on indirect measures that are not as accurate. Presentation and polished shoes become quite important. I have been told I went to meetings at Digital Domain barefoot. I

don't remember this, but I could see it may have happened And you have a free spot, so to speak, because people expect you to be a little weird being an artist.

I think you have to judge the intelligence and competence of who is going to be evaluating you. If you get someone who is good, it does not matter much-show them everything, they will appreciate breadth of skill and flexibility. Include life

drawings. If you get some idiot bureaucrat at an ad firm who is covering their ass day in and day out, well, you don't want to go there anyway. Bu you need to spell it out for that person and not confuse them. Leave out life drawings. Polish that turd.

Another idea about concept work- a lot of places, games especially, really don't want anything creative. They wish a few clichéd shapes rearranged into something that is not actionable. They are turning out product, and that is what they want from you. If you try to do something different, you will be in a heap of trouble. The amount of time and effort that goes into creative work is daunting. It is so much easier to recycle. I find I am doing this way more than I would like, but that is the pressure of commerce. You would be amazed how often I am asked to copy something and change it "some." It is amazing that good work is done at all. Keep this in mind-creativity costs them time and money and is a pain in the ass. Give these types exactly what they want. They will never see it "your way," no matter how much better it is.

So be very observant about the company you are applying at, and the person to, if you have access to that info. A lot of companies will tell you exactly what they expect, so the whole point is mute.

Hey, cool, I just found out that the seven deadly words are not in Microsoft's spell checker! I can just see the memos now. Hahahahahah!

Check the proprtions of the eyes, they seem very widely spaced.

Try to paint the structure of the left eye. Looks REALLY hard at your reference(if you are using any) to see the subtle value shifts that indicate the larger masses of the eye. You have painted the graphic aspects of the eye, so it looks a little stuck on. You can get away with it easier cause it is in shadow.

Read that description of how sargent would paint that I have on my site.
Features last, structure first.

Here is an ornithopter, from, of all things, my art center entrance portfolio. You can see the enthusiasm, but not the training. Look at those ellipses in the landing gear. ouch.

I scanned a bunch of drawings from that period for Joachim, so I threw this on the barbie too.

It is amazing how many people count star wars and those Joe Johnston sketchbooks as a beginning influence.

I know a guy at ILM that says if he sees one more JJ ripoff porfolio he will commit a felony. hehe...

I post it here cause I didn't want to mess up anyone elses thread and it doesn't deserve its own thread.

Ok, you might have to read between the lines here...

YOur cubes are reading gray, value too dark.

Facing plane of far cube is in shadow, but would be receiving a lot of reflected light.

Ok, you might have to read between the lines here...

Out of perspective. Are cubes square to each other in plane view? Check construction, VP's not precise enough. Flip image and you will see.

Your cubes are reading gray, value too dark.

Facing plane of far cube is in shadow, but would be receiving a lot of reflected light.

Receding plane of far cube has feels reflective, should be matte. Cast shadow and shaded sides of cube are too similar in value. Cast shadow should be darker.

Fixing both these previous problems will help cubes read as white.

Need accent of dark where shadowed cube sides approach ground plane, shows surfaces coming together by lack of reflected light.

Cast shadow aligning with bottom edge of cube, not helping show form as much as it could

much better!

No, not an optical illusion. The reason there is any light in the shadows at all is
1)reflected light from the surface
2)diffuse light from sky or bounce from light scattering in air or bounce from more distant objects outside the scene.

Think of it this way. Pretend this cube is a building with 50 stories. If you are on the top floor on the shaded side what do you see if you are looking out? A brightly lit plain, with a lot of light coming at you. You are looking down at that plane, so you see quite a bit of it.

If you are on the bottom floor, you see the lit plane at a very low angle, so there is not much light reaching your eye here. So there is less light incident on the lower parts of the cube.

The mitigating effect is the higher up you go, you are farther from the light source, the lit ground, so it goes a little darker. If this were not a cube, but a long box on end, the top would not see as much reflected light as the lower areas.

Think of an arm resting on the torso. As the form rolls together, they mutually shade one another from reflected or ambient light. This is why it goes darker.

Rowan,

I was with you up to the idea of a vertical surface being lighter due to the added source of the bounce from the surface, but beyond that I am not sure I followed you.

Generally core shadows happen on curved surfaces, but I like a broader and more accurate interpretation of a core shadow as the absence of reflected light. So technically you could get a "core shadow on a cube and cast shadow setup. Sounds strange to my ears, but it makes sense.

If you set up some cubes and observe closely, you will see a whole bunch of effects that fall outside the relatively simple rules that we are following in these studies. The rules are simplified because we want to eventually be able to know how to render a simple object well enough that we can assemble them together in a complex way and still be able to reason out how to show the form through values. It is a solid reason for simplifying things. And the truth is that no object is perfectly matte or reflective, surfaces become reflective as the viewing angle becomes lower, there is no such thing as a perfect point source, etc.

Look at Fred's figure studies. You see light, shade, and the division between or core shadow, very clearly. It is the simplification that makes it read, and eventually, the simplification that will lead you to designing your shapes better. This will make your art stronger, rather than emulating esoteric effects of light.

The whole point of this is to be able to design an object, understand the basic shapes, assemble them, and then shade them convincingly. It will also help you to interpret both what you observe in nature and in photos a whole heap better.

Oh, Rowan #2

The black cube image looks good. You do need arrange of value in the facing side of the black cube. Also, your cast shadows and shaded vertical sides could use a more distinct separation in value; cast shadows go down a bit.

Perspective, composition, craft, look very good. Proceed to one cube, one cylinder, cast shadow falling on one object from another.

In general, follow the idea of lighting along the diagonals of a shape. On the black cube, if you draw a line from the closest bottom corner to the top farthest corner you will hit the light source, roughly speaking. Since you have control over the direction of light, you were a good designer and did this, right

? The general rule is the farther from the source, the darker a surface becomes. As I think you were discussing, this does not always happen and can be contradicted by a whole host of possibilities, but it will give the most easily understandable read. also things will be easier to reason through when you start building complex forms. As I said, the grad goes along the diagonals, not straight up and down, generally. One that face of the black cube, you could go from a 3.4 to a 3.6. Any more and the surface would start bending. When you get into color, you go from warmer to cooler along the same idea.

One thing that I have tried to stress is the separation between light and shadow. The key light takes precedence. I don't care for the darkening toward the bottom as pronounced as you have it in B. It looks like a change in local color or a turn of surface.

Yes, all surfaces reflect, or they would be black. a matte surface reflects light out in a random fashion, the light comes in and is scattered all over the place. A reflective surface bounces the light in the reciprocal direction that it came in on. If I remember my jargon this is angle of incidence=angle of reflection. The degree to which this organization exists determines the degree of reflectivity or matteness. A bright white matte surface reflects just about all the light incident upon it. That is why we get very strong reflected light in these studies. If we

made the ground plane black, well, you know.

But keep in mind the brighter the key light, the brighter the reflected light. The darkening you are talking about in the lit side blurs the difference between

light and dark. For god's sake, don't do it — it will cause you heart ache later on, and it does not buy you anything

For my money, “d” is correct. Keep your halftones on the light side dependent on the key light for it's variation, not reflected light.

So like I said before, you can set this up and because you have many “impure variables” you can get a lot of artifacts that fall outside this simple idea of light, shadow, core shadow. The light can be somewhat diffuse; the cubes could be somewhat reflective, etc.

Another aspect to include on these studies is the idea of “there is no such thing as a sharp corner” All surfaces have a radius. A thin dark line would indicate this where the objects sit on the ground. A cast shadow, yes! The same thing in the shaded side. It might seem esoteric, but the things we include here will help us later on.

Rowan #2,

You are on the right track. Your ellipses are too closed. If that is a cube next to the cylinder, a circle must fit on the top surface. Do that and compare that ellipse to the cylinders. Shadow plotting looks good. I like the subtlety of the halftone falloff on the lit side of the cube. The portion of the cylinder that is in cast shadow that faces the viewer should go a little darker. The reflected light would be blocked somewhat by the cube. You can go a little darker still with your cast shadows. Try to get the separation between shaded side in reflected light and cast shadow with none.

Here's that trouble with your cylinder.

Sumaleth, There are a few funky things going on, but you are pretty close I feel. It will do you good to try another set up. This one has a lot going against it. Your cast shadows intersect each other so that the shapes of the shadows do not reinforce your forms. Backlighting is always a difficult thing to pull off, if you are trying to be specific about form. It is nice and dramatic, but see how much of your objects are in shadow, and what is in light gets a little blown out. Not much to play with, and with a light BG towards the light, you can't really put contrast in there either.

Ok, now do a cylinder and a cube, one white one black. Same for you Rowan1.

Nori, Go back and look at the old thread, there is a lot of info. It has all been said before, and I can't type worth beans, so please help me out here.

And about two cubes VP's, yes the method is called ray intercept, and you can make accurate perspective drawings from plans and elevations. This is how it was done years ago. So you can plot it, I think someone did an example of it on the old thread.

If you are having a large amount of trouble, go back and do some using this method. It will train your eye to what is correct. Eventually, you should get yourself to where you can eyeball basic shapes from any angle or lens or distortion.

Yes Fred, it is exactly a formula. The idea is to analyze form to draw out of your head eventually.

And after you can do that, you can look to include more interesting and complex phenom.

The main difference between inside and outside is the very strong ambient fill.

A very different system. These objects setups and crits are mostly assuming an indoor setup with a fairly dark room. This makes core shadows and reflected light very pronounced and easy to analyze.

The one thing to keep in mind if you are trying to simulate an outdoor scene is that the sky is a strong source of light. There can be a lot of variables with the brightness, uniformity (clouds) and hue.

You do have one advantage, the difference in color temp between sun and sky. This carries through to the shaded side where you can see the reflected light from lit surfaces reflecting a warm light and the blue sky influence remaining cool.

Also keep in mind the very diffuse shadows from the sky source.

Jorge,

You need to use reflected light to show form change within shadows. If you don't, whatever is in shadow will not be explained. You can have softer edges, yes, but there can be quite a bit of subtle work in shadow areas

In looking at my cubes again I messed them up. The ambient light is too low and I do feel they are reading grey. I like Rowans better, using a darker BG and lighter object. A safer way to go if you want it to look white.

keep on going, you are thinking about it the right way.

Nori, You need to construct your cubes first. There are big perspective errors that you need to fix before you start shading. Plot them out for now, so that your eye gets trained to what is correct.

The cast shadow edge of the far cube uses the same vanishing point as the edge that casts it.

Either Rowan, are you up for doing a wooden pull toy? Take the simple shapes and render them with what you have learned here. I would like to show everyone the progression of how this leads to "real" artwork. Try a choo-choo train. Don't forget the wood grain and the pull string!

Another good complex exercise is drawing a lathed banister, you know with all the squares and rounded forms? A good study in deformed spheres and cylinders and form and cast shadows.

If you guys don't do it, I guess I will, but since you will do it sooner or later, sooner is better. I feel you both are ready.

not much to add here, but yes, getting the shapes and values correct is 90 % of it. The edges are a bit down on the priority list.

Copy some Sargent paintings. You have to look carefully, but there is a great hierarchy of edges in his stuff.

In general, the higher contrast between two values, the sharper the edge. Another idea is if the edge is not important to describing something, lose it or soften it.

I had a bunch of books about the movie, and only two remain in my collection. I remember the prod designer notes from something that outlined what I recounted. But I read that 20 years ago and I was pretty young.

Someone is screwed up, I don't have the slightest idea who. I guess you could look at the dates of the particular paintings.

Yes, the top of the skull was done with a path. A nice hard edge to contrast with the more complex ones below. I kind of like this image, I may continue with it.

Weight gain 2000 LOL. I took some liberties as well, I guess. I like the head to look very powerful, like he could bite through a steel pipe without blinking. The

way the creature moved in the film was like he was powered by hydraulics. Very nice. The hydraulic ram load the truck spring: very slow and smooth, then blammo.

I agree with Muzman, I have not seen much from Cameron that I really liked. The first 15 minutes of T2 was pretty sweet. I cried bitter tears at aliens, just not anywhere near the original. Wacomonkey, I was unaware that he had done some matte work. Is it anywhere I can see?

My Cameron Story:

I was scheduled to meet with someone at Digital Domain, who was late. I took a seat outside his office and picked up a magazine. This is when Titanic was in theatres. I thumbed to one of my favorite columnists, Lilian gelmanwaxner in Premier magazine. Her column that month was criticizing Titanic very effectively. I was chortling and guwaffing away when I heard someone walk up behind me. This person noticed I was enjoying myself and asked what I was reading. I responded "this lady is really ripping Titanic a new one. Really funny!" 30 seconds later I finished the article and looked around to see the fellow was Mr. Cameron. He had not responded. He looked at me and I looked at him. A moment for the ages. I still walk among the living. And this was when he was in a nasty war of words with the LA times critic who hated Titanic. How was I not impaled with an Oscar through my chest?

am only guessing here but what I think you are reacting to is what was the point in doing this sketch, the strength of shape.

I am not sure I buy the idea of mixing mediums is a bad thing. This image looks very much liked a gouache sketch I might have done.

I think digital/traditional is a little like when the synthesizer came out. At first everyone was attempting to duplicate acoustical instruments. Over time, it matured and became a separate mode of expression.

I think acrylic paints went through a similar phase- make it look like oils!

I think the origin or technique of the piece doesn't have much to do with its appeal or lack of. It is the artwork itself that you either like or dislike. So if you don't like those highly textured pieces I did, I think it is something other than mixing media. I think you are right, it is a personal feeling.

Do you find yourself liking other mixed media work? I love Bill Sienkiewicz. That is about as mixed as it gets.

When I might use a particular technique is a little random. Or I might see it in my mind's eye in the "flash" I feel my approach to making images to be a little bit of anarchy, but the way I use shape to show form is very traditional. I always play with the whole process, always standing it on its head. My next 3d palette article will outline one approach that I worked out. The technique I think is just a way of putting down and modifying the same old shapes.

Glad to be back. Living out of a suitcase and eating out every night gets old after a month.

There is no reference used and it is a total fabrication. Historical errors abound. On purpose! I doubt Columbus hit up a bunch of Evil Church Dudes to get funding. I believe it was Isabella who thought the price was small enough to throw a few ships at the idea. Of course the globe showing a roughly correct scale and shape of North America is totally wrong. Columbus thought he had landed in India, hehe. Oh, and educated people knew that the earth was round since the Greeks figured out the circumference of the Earth pretty accurately, if memory serves.

It took about 2.5 hours. and was started at 1200, bumped to 3k to finish.

Oh, the Plaque. You know, those little paragraphs next to a painting that tell you a little bit about it? There were two interpretations of this scene that chase

did, and the second was to fulfill some dumb academic idea imposed on him by his teachers. I must go back and see these images, to see what I did wrong. I barely remember them.

Nori, yes, I do change things if needed. Those global correction tools can hide a host of Sins, but sometimes you just change your mind. It is one of the main things that attracted me to digital in the first place. In painting, if your block in is wrong, your screwed. And exploring different possibilities is a time consuming and painful process. There is a neat tutorial on Adobes site about how to use curves.

Weeks, I am not sure what you are asking. Textures? Like flat textures for 3-d stuff? I don't think it is productive to think of form and texture as different things. I have seen a lot of 3-d artists get stuck in thinking this way when they try to get their renders to the next level. As many have said, paint the forms using good values and you will be surprised how little texture is needed.

Void, yes all you say is true, and a lot more. The chief baddies' head came together a little too easily so then what do you do? I have to consider all the other stuff and draw it out. Bah, not enough time. I have gotten into trouble before with sketches being to "finished" looking. But you are absolutely correct in pointing it out if it bothers your eye. I see I need to get better at indicating hands at the same levels as faces. Since my eye did not catch it, I need to see what passes and what does not with various people. That's one of the cool things about this forum.

It has been an old debate about artists at various "levels" and whether it is bad form for a "lesser" artist to critique a "better" artist. Aside from the difficulty of really quantifying how "good" an artist is, consider the idea that even if you are a highly skilled artist, your audience is very wide, and if you are a commercial artist, you had better pay attention to how your work strikes people. My Dad is my best critic, he is honest and harsh and knows nothing at all about art.

I don't know if I relayed this experience, but at an art center class a teacher asked people to collectively rank the final project from best to worst and arrange them on the crit rail in that order. Thus hell was released. The tears! It really brings to mind the saying that 95% of the people are above average.

My suggestion to anyone who only likes adulation, simply state that in your

post If a “newbie” criticizes a “master,” attach that value to what they say and move on. If what is said is stupid or naive, well, it’s not worth the effort

If it's wrong, it is wrong, but your eye should be what tells you it is wrong. Use the 3-d or construction to diagnose, but don't follow it blindly. I agree there is some funky stuff going on, but I find that the specific things you point out are not really what it wrong with it. There are a lot of other variables involved.

Take Columbus' height. Look at your eye level; it is about at 4 feet if you go by the figure standing in the BG. It hits that standing figure at the nipple. It strikes Columbus at the nipple as well. But who is to say that Columbus is 6 foot and the guy in the back is too? There are a few other inconsistencies as well.

UNDERSTAND THAT I AM NOT ARGUING WITH YOU THAT THIS IMAGE HAS NO FAULTS!!!

IT HAS COUNTLESS FAULTS!!

I think the 3-d analysis is imprecise in this case. My GENERAL point is that people think, "oh, it's 3-d, it must be right..." I have had this discussion a lot with people that I work with.

If it bothers your eye, it is wrong. Clearly it looks wrong enough to prompt you to analyze it this way.

But that is the interesting point- I broke the rules, just like someone drawing Superman making him 8 feet tall breaks the rules. But sometimes it looks wrong (what I did) and sometime it looks good(8 foot Superman). Your eye and your sensibility, not a 3-d program will tell you this.

Don't get me wrong, I use 3-d a lot in analyzing things, but it's greatest use is in training the eye. Don't use it as the reason something is wrong. Saying

something bothers you gets my ears a lot more perked up than measuring an ear or something.

So now you ask," well, if the 3-d analysis is wrong, what is throwing it out in my eye?"

Good question...

I don't know. An image like this is a Chinese puzzle. Really interactive. I would have to start over and really get into it. It feels like there are a few wrong assumptions and architectural design and a lot of smaller inaccuracies that multiply on each other.

You have to sharpen your axe a little. Be a lot more sensitive to the very subtle changes in value and color. Use the dropper to see differences in areas.

I am not sure what you mean by pattern and style. Don't think about that stuff. Paint what you see- exactly. If you are patient, it is not that hard at all.

This photo is really awful to work from. The shiny skin and fake fill lighting is confusing. It is difficult making heads or tails of what is going on lighting wise.

Get a better photo.

I wish there was something I could tell you to quickly solve your immediate problem, but there isn't

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Gouache and acrylic are very different but can be handled in a similar way.

Don't think about the different medium; think about working either transparently or opaquely. Most media can be used either way (maybe not water color, but gouache is opaque water color). When you work in either manner, the way of thinking is similar.

So, what do you like about oils? Need to know how you work with them. I would guess that you like to paint opaquely and blend a lot to a high finish, very smooth. Can't really work that way in acrylics.

If the opacity aspect of oil appeals, use Cel Vinyl, a very opaque acrylic that is used for animation cels. I wonder how business is? you can get it in LA at their Culver City factory on Lindblade st.

If it is the blend that you like, you are out of luck. I don't know of a controlled way to do this. Try an atomizer to keep it wet? Probably not. If only a few key areas need a grad, do that first and then paint around them.

I won't suggest with time being short to learn a different way of think about form so that blending is not required. Blending is a nasty habit, that is why they give gouache to beginners. Blending (also called licking) can cause bad eyesight and hairy palms and everyone knows what you have been up to. Long term plan, learn more about different ways of painting.

The most controlled way to use acrylics, and one that suits the liquitex translucent variety very well is to use it very thinly.

This is really the same technique used by many old masters, but without the separating value and color.

Get your drawing on the board; use fixative to keep it there

Using a series of 20-30 very thin washes, wet your board and lay in the wash, tip the board so the wash runs equally everywhere. Lather, rinse, repeat. The goal is to get the board to a middle value that is flat and very thin. One the paint builds up (if you get impatient) it is all over, and you must work opaquely, and there goes any hope of "blending." This is probably the source of frustration with your earlier attempts. A finished acrylic painting has barely any paint on it at all.

Once you have a nice middle value (usually done with a warm earth tone), gradually work dark and lighter with thin washes. DONT use acrylic white, it sucks, use acrylic gesso.

If you want to feather things, keep a damp sponge nearby to dampen the board with. When you paint into this area it will feather well, as it won't have an edge to dry quickly.

One more tip that will save your butt-

Get some 100% cotton vellum (must be this) and fold up a few paper towels and place them on your palette. Get the towels good and wet (not standing). Butcher trays are great for palettes, cause they have edges. Place the vellum on the towels. The moisture will leach up through the vellum and keep the paint you mix there wet, but not wet enough to upset your delicate viscosity control. It works really well.

Hey Pierre,

Let's see some of your newer things as you were alluding to in the other thread. This photo stuff is not what you are capable of, I think. Work like this used to be done by illustrators called "luci-jockeys." Did you trace this? The photo overlays perfectly. If you did, I am even more in the dark as to what you are after. As I hope to point out below, tracing can be done well or poorly, and sometimes there are real reasons not to trace (exaggeration, caricature, even slightly) The colors are not varied from the photo in the slightest. Why not? You could do so much more with this...

Forgive me, but it seems that all your work and actions seem to be aimed at impressing those who have little training in art. I think that perception is what has irritated some. Also, it is apparent that you have quite a bit of experience, and you are held to a higher standard than some of the more beginning people

here.

Does it really matter that it took you two hours? I am not sure what this information is supposed to tell me. I think some look at as bragging. The work is what it is, yes?

I don't find your painting as pointless as some would say. It can be a study in shape design, as much illustration is. That's what I mean by even tracing can be done well or poorly. Is what you pull out of your reference helping or hurting?

I really like the breakdown of the griffin on the chest plate. The variety of edges, shapes, strokes etc are all very entertaining to look at. Where the head turns to shadow has some nice shapes as well.

The 1,2,3 line refers to the edge of the tunic. In your painting you straightened this out and it flattens out quite a bit. You are seeing this cylindrical form from an angle, so I would suggest exaggerating the elliptical nature at some point. If I were doing this, I would have broken that edge into 3 pieces, 1, the top of the ellipse, a faster curve, 2 a straighter area, to contrast with 1 and 3, and 3, an accelerating curve that really shows the arm turning under. I realize you did this quickly, but this is so basic to form that it should be the first thing you put into the image, no matter how brief your sketch. I can't emphasize this enough.

The same idea applies to the armor. The ellipses are not completing, and it flattens out. His right shoulder armor does not wrap around the shoulder. I exaggerated the openness of the ellipse with my little red scratches to make the point. Most of the turn happens in the upper point of the shape.

His right arm has really lost definition, as I say, there is a chance to ignore some of what is there and push the forms a little to entertain the eye a little better. See the top plane of the forehead, cheek and nose? You could push that a little to make not only his head a little more chiseled, but increase the feeling of strong reflected light coming from the sand.

And so on....

I shut up now.

How consistent has your interest and motivation and distraction level been?
What are your other options?

Persistence is required in the face of a lot of obstacles. But this is true in any demanding profession.

I don't think money is a problem. A marginal artist/illustrator is just as unemployed as a marginal anything else.

The most important point I can make is don't make your decision now. You are very young.

My advice would be what a dude at USC film school told me when I was 18. I was just into college and wanted to get into either USC/UCLA film school. Thank God that did not happen. Now I know myself better, I would have been really miserable there and in the biz.

I asked him excitedly, "What should I be doing now to insure that I get into your film school?" He said, "Don't study film, whatever you do. We are hip-deep in film geeks who make films about other films. They make their films about the only reality they know. Go do something in life that is interesting and will rub your brain with many people and ideas. Then come back."

I was underwhelmed. Just give me a guarantee you bastard...

Later I knew he was right.

So my advice, along the same line, is don't worry about it. Go to a REAL school first. Become educated. You will have a richer life, and your art will be much better and deeper for it.

There is the added option of doing other things if art turns out to be not it. You are not cutting yourself off from anything. Take a few art classes if you like.

Don't worry about technique. You don't want to become the atelier queen like me.

But in the spirit of “keeping the options open,” DO NOT stop drawing. Just keep your sketchbook going. You will be in great shape at 21 or 22 to get more specific instruction.

Hope this helps

This is a good exercise.

Also, do copies (exact copies) of master paintings. This I would like to see. I gave all mine away

Film rez is 2056*1550 or something close. Loki will know. Some films were done at 4k a while ago. Pissing contest, nothing more, and really expensive. Some films are done a little lower and sharpened before going to film. This is motion picture I am talking about. Print is much higher. Danny will know this, I think.

The question of rez is interesting. It is easy to get away with more murder at postage stamp rez. On one hand, working at lo rez teaches you to see correctly because you do not get caught up in detail. On the other hand, it is very forgiving.

I would suggest, and I do this myself sometimes, to start at lower rez, and then blow it up to fine tune it. Just don't put any edges in low rez. Low rez also allows more freedom with the brushes. Painting quickly in large areas is painful at best at 5k.

Do try to find higher rez source. Then shrink it and do your block in. Go back to your original file and rez up your painting and finish it. you will probably learn the most that way. Of course you can just work on the hi rez if you want. If you are doing small changes this works fine. Larger stuff should be toyed with at lo rez.

Oh, the things you have been doing look nice, but a little safe. Best to start slow, I know, but you can be a little more ambitious. I know you need to stretch more because you all have pulled it off 100 percent! Go to the edge of what you know, fail a little bit.

Much broader, please. There are cultures that place no value on originality or self-expression. These are modern corruptions. I don't know why many people think they are the only true basis for art. They are only one.

Stop and think of the subtle gradations from craft to art, from art to utility and practical function. Think of people who pursue an intensely personal passion and talent that have nothing to do with "art." They can be as creative (most human endeavor is problem solving) and produce wondrous results as any artist. For example, I am as interested in how the Romans built their roads as I am in their sculpture. I think other aspects of their culture to be as important to their identity as their art.

I suppose architecture is a good example of the blending of art and craft. In a lot of ways, I like architecture a lot better.

Political art pisses off a lot of people. But I don't feel that is a necessary component of art. You can piss people off in a variety of less fancy ways

I agree with the King quote, either. We have arts because we can afford them. The artistic production of a society is a by-product of its efficiency. That person who painted in the caves of France could take the afternoon off to indulge because of the truly beautiful way they solved the problem of living. You don't paint until you have eaten.

This doesn't sound like a professional artist speaking, eh? I guess I am tired of the narcissism I hear from artists so much. You might think I do not like 20th century western art. I love it.

pulls on tin foil suit

1.You guys really think there is such a thing as “better” art? It does not take more than 5 seconds of very simple thought to realize that there are no objective standards for good art. The more carefully you define art, the less relevance art has.

2.I don’t think competitions like this are a good idea. They have their functions, but deciding what is good in art is not one of them. I was asked to judge by Immi, and I accepted. There was to be another judge, just in case I had a brain hemorrhage and, like, chose Kurisu’s or something. Don’t know what happened to him. I will never be a judge of anything again. The only possible outcome for the judge is out of 30 contestants, 1 false friend and 29 people with pitchforks.

3.The only way to proceed with judging something like this is to very carefully define what you think is “good.” This is what I did in the first paragraph:

“I started by eliminating the images that I felt were derivative in style or content or were very crudely executed. That narrowed the field somewhat. I then began to weigh the concept a little more heavily than the execution. If I feel I have seen the idea many times before, I tended to grade down a bit, even if it was nicely done.”

Does this make anymore sense now? Or no?

The fact that Kurisu’s was done in 3-d, what of it? Should I value a pic higher because it was done with a broken arm and a 386? I don’t care how it was done. I appeared very original and gave me the creeps. Need I say that what is original and what gives the creeps is also totally subjective?

Yoshi, bike racks, 3:30 sharp. Could you tell me what you think “shape” is? And who died and made you grand high Pooh Bahh of all things aesthetic?

“Horried” my boil ridden behind...

I have told of the Art Center class where the teacher had the class rank order final projects from best to worst. It was very obvious that 90% of the people there felt they had the best project.

And no, (I can hear it coming) my velvet paintings of Elvis are not inferior to the freaking Mona Lisa. If you wish to carefully define your standards of value, then we can discuss. But not until then.

I will do something on this, I hope I have the time. I was going to say first time around that you don't need to go straight black and white. You could go with two values, much closer together.

This is a neat point. The less contrast and texture you have there, the closer your two values can be and you still have an image. The more contrasty the texture, the more contrast you have to put into your two values in order for the image to read. So you started off flat, that is fine, it allows you to use values that are much closer to what they will be in the final ptg. I am sure you have been fighting that black form the first stroke.

You could start from B+W and then use that as a mask channel to fill with the appropriate color and value.

Another good way to start is from flat and very low contrast shapes. Fill your canvas with what you think will be close to the final tonality of the ptg. Then pick a value that is slightly darker. Paint in the big masses. I think you will find that that suggests more volume for the beginning than super high contrast.

Strong shapes are great in illustration and painting, but not as useful in matte work.

Right now your image is really really dark. The sky is almost always brighter than anything on the ground, unless the sun is out and reflecting on something. There are a few exceptions, but not many. A distant mountain range is always darker than the sky above it. So yes, a lot of ambient fill with a brighter sky (the source for the fill) will help out a lot.



From the middle... Then the darks and the lights at the end.

This is a particular kind of drawing. A more precise drawing would be better on paper, I agree. But what I was trying to do was like tying one hand behind my back to draw in a different way. Ever try to draw with a stick dipped in ink on paper? How about not looking at your paper, only the subject? It gives some interesting distortions. So this was just an attempt to let a different technique influence the drawing.

Most of the work I do I use no line drawing at all, just areas of color and value and carve away. Just a different way of working.

Danny seems to be the man when it comes to printers. I know nothing! I am happy with the Epson. I never owned a printer before. I will use it to print out some digital paintings and paint them in oil.

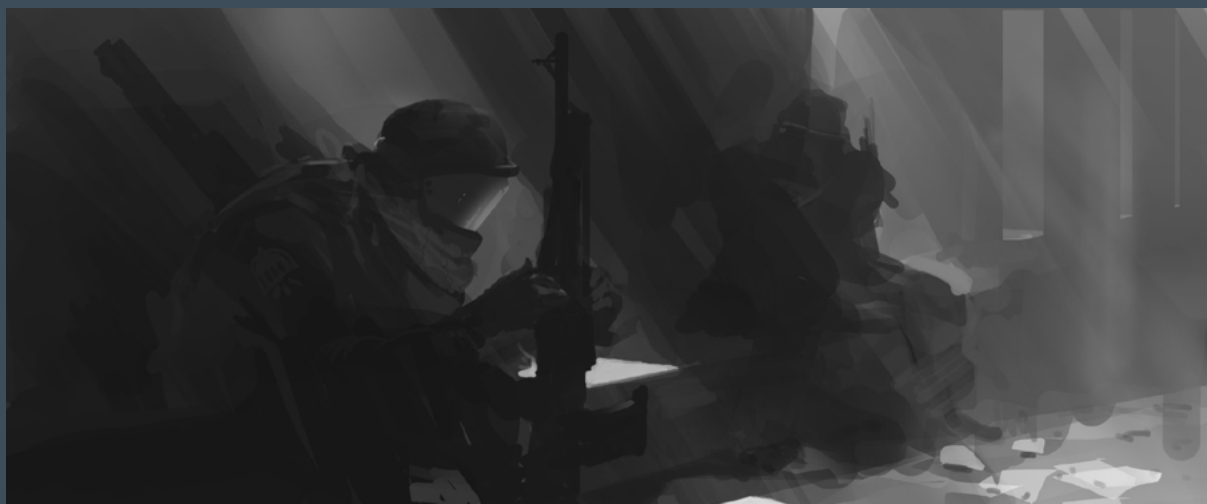
Nori, there is a big difference in form and shape, and I see the two used interchangeably on the forum too much. Here's a weak explanation

I have been looking at the work of Richard Schmid a bit and it is interesting how he works. He starts with detail first, reasoning that why put down a stroke that you only have to modify later? Make a shape, and eye, etc. correct, and then relate further work to this one correct one. This way you are not getting a cascade of errors by relating elements to earlier elements that were not that well considered.

A by-product of this method is you are sometimes surprised at how little you have to do to make an image work.

Of course you need quite a bit of experience to work this way successfully. Most beginners work this way instinctively and teachers are always wrapping their knuckles about it. I know I had to break the habit.

It is fun to think that even the sacred cow of “block in the major areas first” can be inverted. This image was done with these first, basic shapes, but then just a few extra edges and details to finish it.



Sorry for the new thread...

Fred posted a few cool gouache heads yesterday and it got me thinking about where my old ones were. This one was only at the 14 foot level in the great pile, so I took it

A lot of people I sense are kinda mystified about what gouache is and if they have ever used it, how on earth is it ever used in a productive way. You would know what I mean if you had ever tried it. This style is a bit like impressionism, but whereas impressionism shape design reinforces the flatness of the canvas, this style uses shape to try and reinforce form. By that I mean those little strokes wrap around something as opposed to being random. Filters in PS do what impressionists were after in some cases.

You CAN blend gouache, but only a little bit, and if it the two values are very close, and if there is plenty of paint on the board.

So why do people think this stuff is good to learn to paint with? As you can see, the painting is executed by little, independently mixed and applied “tiles” of paint. You have to get good a mixing. To turn a surface, you have to mix one color, decide exactly what color goes next to it to turn the form, and mix that one two. Adding to the misery is gouache has a wider value range while wet than dry. It dries toward a middle value. Very difficult to match exactly.

Also the paint is water soluble, even after you have applied it. This means you have to use enough paint, and mix it to just the right viscosity, and then put it down, and LEAVE IT ALONE. That is what brings the color underneath up and makes mud. You can paint on gouache even with a 1/8 inch layer of paint down.

So what is this teaching you? Look at the color, mix it accurately, mix it well to a proper consistency, put it down and leave it alone. Think before you act, think, plan, execute. If it isn't right, it won't work.

What bad habits does this help break? Sitting with your nose 2 inches from the board, not looking at the model, not thinking, blending away, getting caught up in the buttery, blendy forgiveness of oil paint.

The Quaker oats man is done in gouache, as is Uncle Ben on the rice package. it is very flat (not glossy) and was very easy to reproduce. Because it has no gloss, it has a limited dark value range. High key is the Way.

This image was planned from a photo, I did a drawing first, then painted. It departed quite a bit from the source. It was damaged by water in a move, so I rubber-stamped it a little. There is a lot of funky stuff in the drawing. I was pretty early in the program.

Would I recommend using this stuff? No, not on my worst enemy. It is boot camp, and if you think pain is good for the soul or for learning and discipline, go ahead.

BTW, Syd Mead only paints with gouache.



Hi Fred,

I can't believe I am saying this, but look at some of the top illustrators from the 60 and 70's. I have Bill Sienkiwicz sketchbook and he said something that I agree with. You can see hints of this illustrative style in his work, but it is cool, because he learned well from them. He did not ape the technique or style, but he learned what "choices" (Sienkiwicz's word) they made in what not to paint. They really simplified things to make the design stronger. I think this type of thinking will help you with your comic work.

People like bob peak, Robert heindel and Bernie Fuchs all simplified stuff a lot, and it was all screwed together really tight by flawless drawing.

I remember when I was first an art student and taking many drawing classes I was mightily confused. One class used a big stump of charcoal and huge newsprint and had you just go for the gesture. Another liked fine observation and used a 000 technical pen. Another was concerned with construction. Which way was the Way?

In the end there seems to be two different ways to see and think about drawing. One is structural, making sure that what you have drawn makes sense in a 3 dimensional world, and one deals with the appearance of values and shadow patterns and halftones and highlights. To draw well, you have to be able to think both ways at the same time (!) It is hard, but you have to. Simply copying what you see (even if you are amazingly accurate) will not do. Drawing is a selection of facts, and a suppression of others. You are trying to express form, and there are a lot more sophisticated ways of doing this than "don't bother me with thinking, I will transcribe what I see." I guess this is what may be the shortcoming of a lot of the photo-based artwork that I see done. It is not Saying anything. Not to start another war, you all know that I am pretty liberal when it comes to defining value in art. This opinion is just where I happen to be at the moment.

Simon,

It is great that you are trying to do this without reference, but I think that is where your problems lies. The shapes are very generic and mechanical. The shapes that you draw should play up the subtle differences between them. Some small, others large, some rounded, others harder edged.

Look at Fred's info on the eye. The upper and lower lids are very different in character. Also, the iris is usually 2/3 hidden under the upper lid. Having the iris lower is a micke trademark. There are a lot of subtleties that you could work in there, even without reference and from your general knowledge, once you learn them.

In painting from life, you cannot draw shape to shape, only what you see. You have to abstract what you see and interpret it through what you know of the structure. People move around too much to simply draw the shapes. Also knowledge of structure will help you correctly interpret and edit what you paint.

So in short, learn more about the construction of the eye, read Fred's info, and make it less generic.

here's one I did a while ago, while I am not happy with it at all, and it was done from life, you see the shape design and differences in upper and lower lid and iris that I am meaning.



I think your landscapes are beautiful. I think they are personal and refined enough that you should solve the problems that you see.

genius? haha! Not a chance. I am lucky in that I have been very interested and motivated to work hard over a number of years. I also have a range of interests that support one another.

And like Grandpa, not empty-handed.



I am looking at an older school of illustration, Cornwell was just one of many excellent artists in this group. I really believe that I am not wasting my time developing the narrative aspect of my work. Does it brand it as illustration? Yes and no. I still have only seen three Cornwell pieces. Fred bought me a book and I must pilgrimage to get it.

I have a gigantic pile of email to go through now, so bye for now. I see yours at the top, Samdragon.

Man, and a bit of reading here, too.

Solitaire, I like historical stuff in general. This looks revolutionary war to me, but the hat is colonial and the coat is British. I did this because I liked the combo of the shapes, not accurate, but why let reality get in the way of art? There are only a few people who would know this and have the piece destroyed in their eyes because of the inaccuracy, so I think it is a good choice to toy with history.

I am happy that people are speculating about what is going on here. That is what I had in mind, and what made me keep on going with it. I never thought of some of the interpretations that some of you have, that is one of the cool

things about this board. My own interpretation was homecoming, but that is where my mind was at the time. So evil toylet, it can be whatever you want it to be.

Optic illusion, I started this one with a simple line drawing of the figure in Photoshop, with no idea that I would ever even put clothes on the guy. It evolved from there. I am in the process of learning everything I can about the figure, from the skeleton out. There is no other way if you want to do the best work. My figure education has been abysmal. I know the basics, landmarks, etc, and compared to other illustrators I am OK, but not for where i want to go. if you are a professional illustrator, consider making the commitment to learn anatomy well. If you don't, you will always be at a disadvantage. And if you think putting it off is Ok, think again. You have to learn it sooner or later, it will do much more good sooner.

I am at the humerus and moving toward the inner and outer condyles. The triceps works in opposition to the bicep and is attached here and here... Yes, learn it so you KNOW it.

Just my opinion.

Alias moze, Who is this person at Dreamworks? I don't remember this.

Playing hooky.

Should be working don't tell anyone.

Maybe should have kept working.

How far can you go with loosing edges and form? It really is important to think about which ones to keep. Helps with motion, too.

How do you capture the feeling of battle in a still image? I was watching that cool documentary on Napoleon and there were many paintings of battles that I had never seen before. They were the usual 19th century style, beautifully drawn and crafted, but lacking motion.

There is a lot I can do to solve this problem better. (hey yeah, more blood! that's it!) I can't think of an image that really does it well.



I guess I should have said I am after the emotion rather than the motion. I am after a picture that would evoke the emotions of being in a battle. One thing I begrudgingly give saving private ryan is the battle sequence that was shot with damaged lenses, screwed up time, confusion, grainy contrast, confusion, etc. I think these devices were pretty effective. I would imagine that to be there you would not perceive things normally, if for no other reason than massive amounts of adrenaline making you temporarily insane.

I was after this feeling, but I will continue with other pics on this same problem. The lack of contrast, confusion, mixed battle lines, etc. were all intentional. My point about using more blood was ironic; it is just that sort of convention that I don't want to use. Same with motion blur.

Action, motion, etc are all secondary to the feeling of being in this battle. They will help, but I don't think they will get me where I want to go.

One idea is to go with the opposite direction with contrast and detail. Here I have muddled it together, but maybe the way to show the heightened senses is to makes a very high contrast image with extreme detail. Not detail that necessarily resolves into forms and materials, but odd things that you might

notice while drugged. I will play with it

Hehe tweek, glad it looks like a concert. The situation is not much different. I should put a few nuns in there to really confuse things.

Dude, just one layer. I paint for a few minutes on a 2nd layer, then toggle it, looks good, I drop it and start a new layer. Sort of like an undo that goes beyond one or a few steps.

I have been harping about my shape design is not strong enough, and that I am inspired by Mücke's shapes, but here I did not want that. I tried to break as many rules as I could and still make it work.

Rhomb, it sounds like it is a little more successful for you, that is what I am after. The knife falls off camera and it hurts even more. I saw the Hitchcock's The Birds again and there is no musical score. Very inspiring

Pierre, very nice ideas, thanks for adding them. I would love to see Frank Craig's image. Wasn't there an illustrator by that name? I suppose Picasso was after multiple viewpoints, or look at some of Hockney's Polaroid montages.

Jezebel, you can critique me anytime, it is appreciated very much.

Jason, forgive my denseness, but i could not understand what you were saying. I think I do, but let me paraphrase. Too much definition of form will make things read, but that diminishes action. Too much abstraction is good for action, but flattens out the picture because there is no form. Thus a balance?

Yes Immi, it is very close value wise on purpose. I might go the other way next time, as I mentioned above.

marc_taro, took about 1.5 hours. More than I allow for most of these things, but I was thinking too much, a very irritating habit.

scanning oil paintings is hard, almost as hard as doing them.



Done from life, about 2-3 hours.

If I am getting too artsy fartsy, just say so and I will retreat to noodled shiny stuff

Most of the stuff I post here is really out there for me. I learn and grow a whole bunch falling on my face. I don't know if I would be exploring this much without this forum as an audience.

And mostly I get honest opinions here, very helpful

Hey Sporq, I grew up in Columbus. I was there this summer. I do a lot of "real" paintings. It is a different game. I am just learning oils paints, and they are kicking my ass. as you can see. When I painted traditionally for illustration, I used acrylic and gouache.

I was not really concerned with the structure of the head here. I just wanted it to look round. But everyone is right, I should not post it if the drawing is

screwed up. Makes me look like a hypocrite Janne, I am glad it feels round this way to you. It was painted over an old painting. More composting. It is painted on a plain canvas board you get at the art stores, but it has gesso in some areas so it looks thicker. It is 12*16 inches

The old idea in most media is called fat over lean, meaning that you work thinly at the beginning and move to thicker paints in the end. And keep in mind that you start in the middle values and move lighter and darker. You can usually just add a few soft accents for the darks, and the lights get thicker and thicker. This is just one way of working.

Surfer boi, yea, she was bored all right! I would be as well doing nothing but sitting still for 2 hours. Sargent would often ask a sitter to bring a friend to keep the sitter animated. This leads one to conclude that he drew structurally as opposed to shape to shape. In looking at his originals, I can see this. It is amazing what a very talented person can do if they devote their entire life, with no distractions, to a very narrow specialty and media and style. Most are not very talented to begin with, or become bored or distracted, etc. I believe Sargent said this of a friend who died early and had not lived up to early promise. "He found his pleasure in too many other things" I am interested in so many areas of art that I flounder. I can only hope to be able to synergize (to abuse a nauseating buzzword) them all one day.

Anthony, Float is make layer via copy, I think the key in windows is Ctrl-J. Then right click with a selection tool active and choose numeric transform. Same procedure when you are done. Not sure why you are having trouble. maybe someone knows PC photoshop better than I, but I have it here and it works that same. But be sure to paint on and empty layer over what you have blown up. Then throw away the blown up layer. Shrink down the layer that you painted on. Very important.

In response to your other question, the stuff I do here is not done with this trick at all. I don't use this blow up technique very much, but it works very well in some cases. The stuff I do and post here is between 1-3k.

Good point, Lord Arioeh. I am having more luck getting looser stuff by art directors now than I did. I think I am a better artist than I was (I hope) and the simplification is an asset rather than "unfinished."

Jason, yes that is the theory, anyway. Oil is such a weird medium.

Simon, Ouch! That hurts! But it would not hurt if it did not have a grain of truth to it. Yes, I grew up in a cinema as much as a museum. I am not as inclined to think of this as a bad thing now that the 20th century has happened to us all. There are hack fine "artists" and genius comic book artists, we have been down this road before. I appreciate your work staying away from what you probably consider impure influences. That's fine. Sargent was heavily criticized for being influenced by photography and composing and lighting in a dramatic and "theatrical" way. When I really think about it, the division between art and commerce doesn't really exist. I hear fine artists whine about a purity that has never existed. It reminds me of my grandma reminiscing about the good ole days (that were never that good).

The point you made about a repetitive theme is something that I think can be applied to us all. That is one of the reasons I am here parading around in my pajamas. I am trying to shed a snakeskin I didn't even know I had. Thanks for pointing out that I have not yet left safe waters.

Hey Fred, yes, I did it in thousand oaks. It was a three hour class, two hours of painting. It is interesting to note that you feel very differently about the chances that I have taken than Simon. Hehe... Yes, I am trying. But you know one thing I am not trying is... spend 3 months on a painting. I may soon, but not yet. Most of my experiments have been short sketches. Failing after three

months of hard work, now that's risk.

Sometimes I like doing my commercial work better. The challenge is more easily defined and can actually be way more creative, given a client with flexibility. Painting from life is like going to the gym for me. 50 reps, next routine. I know many like life painting as an end in itself, but it is not to my taste. I am overstating this, but I am sure you know what I mean.

Yoshi, thanks for that vote of confidence. I know I irritate you, sorry bout that.

- 1) I had the benefit of somewhat proper training, which a lot of people here are too young or not as fortunate to have had
- 2) I have been working hard at it for a number of years. I have done piles of images, probably thousands by now. You cannot underestimate the importance of "mileage."
- 3) Doing commercial work has the strange benefit of forcing you to do things that you would never have tried if you were a fine artist. It broadens you.

I see the influence of my work in a lot of things posted on this board and I have mixed feelings about it. I looked at and emulated a lot of artists that I admired, and you can still see definite echoes of them in my stuff today. I think that is what is happening here, and that is fine. What I don't like to see is if someone is too influenced and tries to get work with this and the work is sold as "I am cheaper and available." That does nobody any good, and I have seen it happen to other illustrators, and not a few. But I know that people might learn from where I have been and move on to bigger and better things. I will do the same, and that is part of the reason for my hanging out around here.

I was not very encouraged by my parents to become an artist, and I agreed at the time. But we did not know of the existence of illustration as a profession. I was trained as an industrial designer. Go figger.

How much money you need? A poor person today lives better in many ways than a king 500 years ago. You won't starve, so no worries.

Keep in mind that an artist is very different than an illustrator. Don't need to explain this. But I see many illustrators who want to simply "do their thing" as a fine artist might and then expect a client to recognize their genius. Realize that you are solving their problem, listen to the client and try to do it.

Your best insurance is learning basic design and drawing skills. This might change. I saw that a guru at pixar looks for acting ability in animation recruits, figuring that the software will handle the rest. Interesting. I still think that good art and design will support you no matter what the direction you choose later, and that will increase your chance for success, regardless of how you define success.

I thought this reminded me of the Imperial Sardaukar from Dune when I looked again. "Bring me the head of that Paul guy!"

I am really trying to get the time an inclination to finish this one. There have been some very good crits and suggestions here, thank you all. I read them all very, very carefully. Buuut, in the time it would take me to finish this out I could do three more like this. I am inclined to do 3 more. I think I will be further along in the long run

This took about 2 hours, because it went through a lot of changes.

Jaymo, the top image is 3k, and was derived from the bottom one, so it is similar.

"Recently, most of his work seem to just lift color schemes from classical renaissance paintings, and don't try to push that at all." I guess by this you mean the warm sepia tones? Yes, I do look to older painters more than modern

ones. Umm, the little sketch is has no color at all.

Another aspect that may make the little one more appealing is that the content is more original. Have we seen enough kick ass 8 foot tall demon dudes for one lifetime? The little sketch is a less hackneyed. I indulge in these subjects because they are established canons, and I guess I think I might end up with a fresh take on an old genre.

I can see the attraction of the little sketch, it's high contrast and small size make it easy to read into whatever you like. I think this is what I am trying to capitalize on with a little looser style. See how that works? I post a more explicit image and people tend to gravitate (well, not everybody) towards the little cryptic sketch, because they can really let their own imaginations do the real work. Artwork as enabler.

I remember doing little paintings as preparations for a finished illustration and liking the little sketch a lot. I tried to get the same feeling into the finished piece, with seldom any luck. Digital makes this problem a lot less bothersome.

Kimzoll, I have never heard of this comic, I will look it up. Thanks!

Aliasmoze, haha! I go darker and darker so easily, it really part laziness, I think. It is strange, i like rusty industrial depressing stuff, but i can't stand to actually be in such a place. I need green pastures and warm breezes.

I think the idea of this image is very safe. There is really little of the vaunted experimentation going on here. It was as easy as falling out of a chair. Trying to break old habits and think in new ways is the hardest thing you can do. I just took a little break here

Chapel, I have no problem at all with what you have said. I like people to be as honest as possible, as long as they are honest and articulate. Even a polite no thank you is fine. I get a better idea of what people like, and it always surprises me. I feel your opinion that the forms of the sketches I do for this forum are flat is very accurate. In a lot of ways I am trying to flatten my shapes out to strengthen the design. i am clumsy at it yet, but i am getting somewhere, I think. It is kinda foreign to me. Training as an industrial designer and even a traditional illustrator teaches you to put as much possible information about form in as you can. Every surface is given explicitly. Later, you begin to simplify. That is where I am at. So micke, that flat sky is somewhat intentional. I have to

do real looking skies all day

Also, which paintings do you feel were better? But please don't confuse "finished" with "better."

I don't worry about this client, this image is not appropriate for their needs. They might like it, but not for the project.

I am doing very finished work for the Final Fantasy movie, which is where 95% of my time is going. I think I will have to pass on car whores because of this previous commitment. I will release them after the movie comes out. But most of them are 6-8k, and those sick little jpegs on my site make me wonder why I get any work at all. So my loosening up here is not really the result of a brain tumor, depression, or whatever, just doing something very different. but I am wondering, have I ever done tight stuff for this forum? hmmm...

Yes, Sergenth, you guessed it pretty well.

Francis, not cinematic? cool! More like comics. oh. back to the search for a voice...

That arm thing did start out to be the guys other arm, but I forgot about it and did not accentuate it. Kinda works either way, I guess. Up to you, the way I like it.

Thanks you toast for those eloquent words, they are appreciated.

Quarternis, I like the way you think about it, very basic. I did the opposite at first, like this:

I was gonna put the back end of a closer ship in the middle ground on the left, with some other figures in front of that.

oh. what do you think of this? I think it sucks and I hope I don't need a lawyer. There is no mention of my name, that goodbrush is a site, and they put their damn address on the image. Balls!

How old are you?

I like everything of yours that I have seen.

I am not bothered by the anatomy at all. Study it yes, but don't lose the rhythms you have naturally.

I am always saying if someone says it's wrong, it is, so I guess I have to be consistent and say that the people here pointing out problem areas are on to something.

But whatever you do, don't get stiff and academic on us. That would be a shame.

Just draw as much as you possibly can, everyday.

You and Justin have talent, in that your mistakes are pleasing exaggerations rather than festering boils (like mine). Degas is someone that has this feeling to me. Mucha is far more academic, but still pleasing in his own way.

I guess what I am saying is be careful who you listen to, you have something special, and it can be trained right out of you.

Oh, being careful in who to listen to applies to me as well

When it rains these olives in my backyard get very dark and shiny. They really are beautiful trees. This is painted as it was drying out and then the sun came out.

I have always enjoyed Sargent's paintings of olives, and I saw them first through his images before I saw them for real.

I know it is tough for a lot of people to get out and paint from life, for a variety of reasons. You can always paint stuff around you. Don't feel limited and keep your eye fresh. Painting from life is so important.



Hmmm, if you hate oil paints, but want to blend, this is puzzling.

A general rule of painting regardless of media (general rule) is "fat over lean." This means you paint with thinner paints at first and as the painting progresses, the paint is used thicker and thicker. If you think about it, this would also mean that at the end stages, the paint you are applying and the area you are applying it to are similar in value and color.

If your block in is then nice and thin, you can use a wet into wet process to get some color and value grads. Keep the forms that you are rendering very large, like the whole sphere of the head. Don't noodle at this point. Another difference between thin and thick paint is the edges that they naturally provide, with thin wet into wet being softer and thicker being harder. The digital analogy is use the pressure sensitivity and keep it transparent early on, and then turn off the opacity control later.

But your question about making grads in gouache is a good one. The whole point of beginning painting in gouache is that you can't do this. You have to find the edge of a form, mix the definite value and color, and then paint it that way. No mooshing or disguising textural effects allowed. This forces many good habits and good shape design and thinking about the basic form you are painting. So think about how to break your forms this way. Take a photo and run the posterize filter on it. This is a little of the way you should think in with gouache. There are no gradations, yet the information is there. I like the mosaic filter sometimes, because that does the same thing, but shape is eliminated from the equation. Very good for analysis of form and finding out what is there, not what your preconceptions are. Take a photo of a head, run mosaic on it. Look at the mouth, I bet it does not look like 2 red earthworms with dark lines around them the way most beginners paint them. This is a similar lesson to the Betty Edwards "draw it upside down" exercise. Try even to paint from the mosaic filtered image.

This is why a lot of images I do here lack detail. I am trying to go back and get a better foundation under what I am doing, to focus on bigger forms and shapes. This is what makes images really look nice, and yes, especially when the detail is added. Which I will do...later.

and now, some other general rules from G&S

as a general rule of life
I don't allow my future wife
my lovely bride that is to be
to marry anyone but me...

Wonton has asked for a crit privately, but I thought I would answer him here.

I have said a lot of times that something might have too much contrast or "bounce" a lot, this is a good example. If the idea is to convey size, you have to follow atmospheric perspective closely. And this is even truer with something underwater. The edges also get pretty soft. I know this is really brief, but you see the difference between wontons and mine is the amount of contrast as you go back into space. You might say, but I need to use different values to show detail, fair enough, but the difference in values can be extremely small. This is how to get it looking "big"

Also play up the differences in scale between the objects close and far away, and this especially includes the lights. The close ones should be bigger than the far ones, and the far ones could be starting to diffuse somewhat. Also the scale of the secondary forms on the trunks or whatever they are needs to recede. Also think that you are seeing a lot more of the structures in the back, so you might see what the ends of them look like.

hmmm... I can't go on forever on this one, but I think you missed the idea of atmospheric perspective. If you have access to a 3-d program, put some cubes with texture maps out on a plane and render it with generous fog. The farther you go away from the camera, the more the fog influences the local color of the object. A black cat on a roof a mile away is not black.

Forgive me if you already know this stuff, but are having trouble applying it. Look at your forms, and evaluate each one with respect to how far it is away from the viewer.

Your picture is a little more complex in that it is backlit, so the fog is not only obscuring, but a little diffusing as well, and that can make it a light source. The end result is really just that the fog is a lighter value than it would be without that bigass light source behind everything.

So, two things to summarize,

1) your values still bounce too much, there is too much contrast for it to read as "big."

2) Organize your values more in line with atmospheric perspective so that your forms will "stack" better. This is done by really thinking about where things are in the z-axis.

Example- The left foreground pillar is closer to us at the bottom. That is the way I read it anyway. You see in my sketch that there is a little more contrast and a little darker at the bottom? That shows that it is tilted away from us. Being more sensitive with stuff like this will start to make things read as more real and less like flat abstract shapes.

Get a stack of magazines and draw from those. It does not have to look like art to be able to draw from it. I like doing caricatures of important people I find in newsweek or time. Good practice.

Just like eating, having a wide range of subjects and styles is really important. I remember most of my students would just like to draw cars, and maybe from one angle only. I could never make them understand how they were hurting themselves. I like the compost metaphor. The best artists come out of rich soils, with a lot of influences.

hey looks good!

Check your verticals, though. They are all leaning to the right, or maybe there is a cat on my shoulder.

The whitewashed walls in sun could almost go white in a few places. Right now the read on the material is grayed somewhat to me.

The heavy black you are using for windows does not do the rest of your careful work justice. In the back they are punching holes in space. There are two windows on the left right by the curve of the tree that you have backed off a little value wise, I think that looks better.

Nothing wrong with black, in general, although "painterly" types like to stay away from it, preferring to go with a very dark saturated color instead.

It is just a convention of industrial rendering, a cheap and very effective way of keeping your depths organized.

oh here..

I don't think this helped much, but what I did was take out some of the contrast in the bg to make it stay back there a little more.

This is not always desirable, depending on what you are after, but with straightforward naturalism like this it is basic. I tried to keep the blacks under the platform in the foreground, and removed them from behind the mech.

Sometimes you might want a maximum contrast between a foreground object and BG, to create some attention and drama, but realize that in this kind of situation it brings the BG forward.

I have huge gamma problems working on a mac and posting in a PC world, so forget subtlety, which is what this requires.

I like Dickey Wagner. I recommend Tristan and Parsifal, not the loud Ring stuff (ride of the valkeries) There is a lot of visual material there. Arthur Rackham did a series of great ink and watercolor illustrations for the Ring cycle, available from Dover. A lot of early American Illustrators talked fondly of having the collection in their youth.

I did want the eye to go black. This is before the fateful night in act 2. The sun is setting, just before the curtain rises. She is Irish.

hmmm....dark.

I am liking Enayla's and Isric's softer images from the usual diet. Wasn't there someone whining about girls in white dresses and pretty stuff being real art? Well, if you are still out there, I hope this is pretty enough. If not, just hit ctrl-u

and crank it up, there, much more artsy (Speaking of, I have known art directors who idea of art direction is exactly that.)

I have taken pains to correct this image for the PC world. If it looks blown out and green, it should not.

Hmm, everyone seems to like this one... yea! I was wondering if anyone would, being a little different. I am glad that it has obvious signs of "brushstrokes" and flatness here and there (otherwise known as sketchiness or unfinished) but it is now not bothering as many people. That must mean I am getting better.

Sporq, from the middle values out, especially if you are starting or are unsure of your subject. You can go darker and lighter later only if you need to.

I have been looking at Mucha a lot lately, but not the painting as much as the drawing. Interesting that seeped in! I think the Sargent influence will always be there, it's part of my brain now.

Napalm, not plans for a book, the thought never occurred. I am not good enough yet. If it happens, maybe later on. I have a lot of work yet to do. Then

the world will only be cluttered up with one book of mine.

Light, choose paintbucket tool, shift click on the gray window color, voila.

Wyatt, she's crazy, drugged, full of lust and is going to die. Not that unusual, really.

Micke, thanks for the cartoon! I have really learned a lot from your work, including things like this. I make things way too complex as part of my nature. It seems your natural bent is to simplify. This cartoon is way beyond me.

MJM, I appreciate the idea. I think you are right when you say that I am doing things that look old mastery. I hope it is not only the sepia tone I would have to think about how to do some extreme perspectives before I would jump in. They seem to dominate the image so much, and they seem to be abused in comics quite a bit. I think the subject would have to suggest it first. hmmm, they are quite prevalent in film, and my stuff looks too much like cinematography sometimes... I will think more about it.

Aliasmoze, I have been trying to get more narrative in my sketches here, with different degrees of success, but it requires so much planning. whine whine. I like spontaneity a lot to.`

Danny, forgive me for doing this, I don't think it will help you at all, but I will post it anyway just in case you find some value that I have missed. BTW my

Epson is impressing me daily

My verbal comments, like you need any from me,

1 the fog, if it is being hit by sunlight, is pretty much the same material as the snow, and much closer. I think it should be a higher value to get the feeling of sun.

2 watch the really subtle differences in the radii of the anatomy. Yours seem to

have the same very rounded feeling all over. Example, look at the shoulder that is being hit by light. The top of the shoulder blade is a faster radius than the deltoid, which you can really see in the photo. You have kind of generalized that into one shape. If you want to get really fancy, the deltoid is creating a cast shadow onto the shoulder blade. You would see this in a man, but maybe not here. They are the same muscles as in a weightlifter, just subtler. You gotta put em in. I know you are fanatical with the detail to care about such things.

3 The overall lighting in this situation is a direct top key light, a diffuse overhead cool light and a strong diffuse bottom warm light. The reference has all kinds of reflectors and fill tricks to it that have obliterated a lot of the anatomy. I screwed up her left shoulder blade, but too lazy to fix the jpeg. Don't look at that! What I tried (unsuccessfully) to do is break where each major surface is facing. top of shoulders, in shadow of head is lighter and cooler. Vertical surfaces are darker. Downturn surfaces are warmer and brighter. You can really see this in the sphere of the hair. Also her upper right arm is a different plane than her lower arm, which is facing the warm light from the grass. This is the problem with reference like this. Take your own, then you can light it to show you exactly what is going on.

To those who think this is improper to use reference this way, it is not artistically. Artists have used photos this way since their invention. I have a lot of documentation on this if you don't believe me. Photography has had a huge impact on art, in many, many ways.

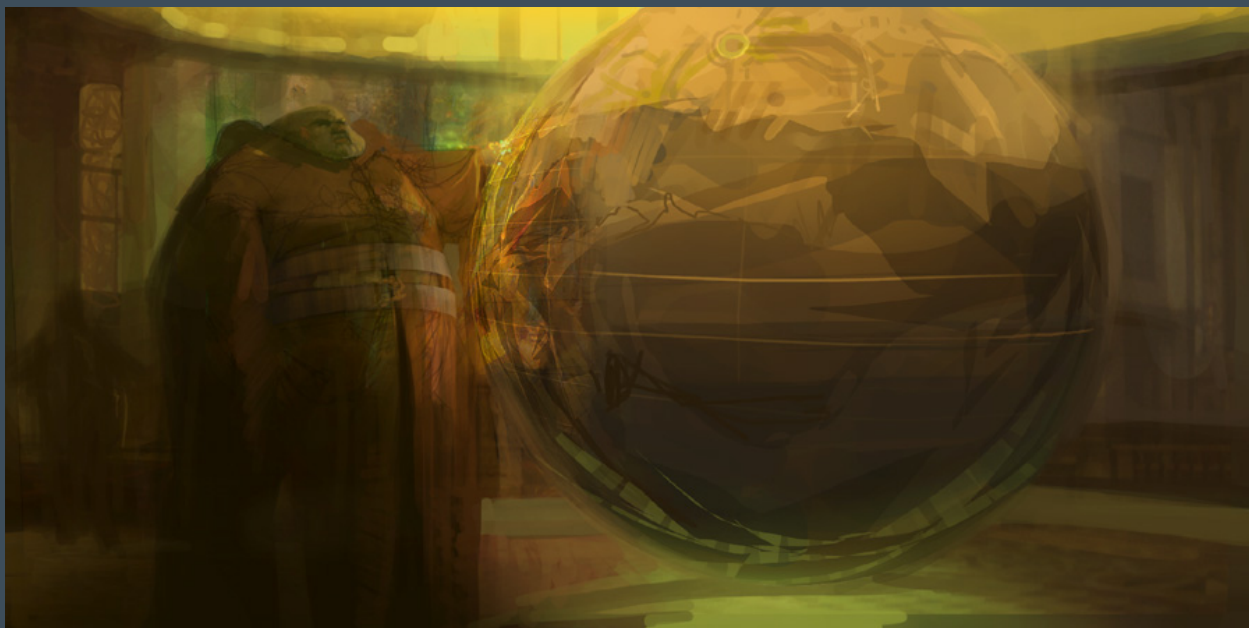
If the photographer were to see this used in a commercial way they might not be too pleased. Depends on what Danny has in mind for this.

YOu know your perspective was messed up right? This one is closer. Work on it until it is right. The time you put into the little details would be better spent on more important things.

Priorities! Big important stuff first, little stuff later.

So you say, "I don't know how to fix the big stuff, so I will redeem things by encrusting the picture in detail, and nobody will notice the big stuff being wrong."

This reasoning will just slow down your overall progress.



I did not intend that the sphere be reflective, but if it reads that way, hmmm

ok If I remember the passage in the book it says something about the globe being a swirl of caramel colors with fine inlaid gold lat and long lines, of the finest imperial manufacture.

Ceenda, I use all the tools a lot. The lasso thing you see on the globe is a little “technique-ey”, I should probably stay away from it.

I sometimes have a picture in my head, or a particular lighting condition, but sometimes I just start painting and let the image suggest things. Digital is nice because you can work it endlessly with no media problems, and you can try overlays and wacky ideas all night. It is a great tool. I use layers to keep spatial order and as convenience in masking, but sometimes it get to be a bother when you have to search which layer is where, so with sketches like this, I use just a few layers and as things progress, I flatten them. Once it is flattened I can manipulate edges if needed. But I mainly use layers to allow freedom to be gestural and free and not worry about things. This helps the artwork and just cannot be done with something like watercolor.

Frost, I will use the adjustment tools, but not for major changes. This will mess things up with banding and crushing. Try to keep your values to the middle of what you think they should be, without going really dark. Then you can tune it

later with the adjustment tools and rest assured that you won't have far to go. If you look at some of the edges that your eye sees as hard you will see that the value steps on either side are pretty close. This softens the apparent hardness of the edge. It is still crisp, but not jumping. I think you are making a lot of

progress with your work Frost. Work from life more

But ya know I worry about anyone taking what I am saying too literally.

Blitz, now that i like my wacom, I generally block in things with a large brush with the size turned off and the opacity turned on. Sometimes I might reverse this to get other effects, but do play around with it. The big brush opacity block in does look like watercolor. I try to keep some of the freshness that that brings. Despite what I said above about media buildup, you can overwork something into a big mess. If this happens, it is usually because I am not understanding the forms well enough to simplify and design things well. time to start over and refocus on what is important.

El Caseron, I am 36, old man. The figure and part of the globe was from an old sketch, and when Ceenda mentioned it in his thread I brought it up and thought to expand it a little. I would guess there is about 2 hours in the things total. The original is 2000*1000 pix

Flushgarden, no I am not mad about your email! But it bothers me that I can't answer them anymore. I can't believe you are 19. Your apple man is great. Not only did you understand the forms, but you simplified them beautifully. The rib cage is a great design. Fix those ellipses on the joints, though. They are really important to get right, no matter how fast the sketch.

Don't think if I used one technique or another. Mix and match as you see fit. I do see you put that suit tutorial to very good use. hehe...

Hi beet, if you don't like me doing this, I will take it down. I do like the pants, and I really did very little (enough?)

Some minor changes, if the idea is bright light, there are some things that could help.

Photos give the impression of bright light through blowing out and overexposure. The skin, a much darker local value than the pants, are exposed correctly. The pants are gone. If you were sitting there, you would see the detail in the lit side of the pants, you would see detail everywhere. The eye has a much wider exposure latitude than film. So, when working from a photo keep this in mind.

One trick photographers use is bounce light. They have the dilemma of "what do I expose correctly, the lit or shaded side?" So they use big reflectors to bounce light back into the shaded side of things so they can crank down the exposure and hopefully get both lit and shaded sides.

They needed one more reflector for the bottom of her face, or you can paint it in yourself. hard to do, unless you know how to paint the form in the first place.

What if someone takes a photo, scans it and smudges it and it looks really cool?

I think the misconception is that skill in drawing is defined by how accurately you can reproduce a photo. This is the way most people think about it, and that is usually the first way to learn how to draw. You try to closely reproduce a silhouette of something you see. The degree to which you accomplish this shows how skillful you are.

Drawing is SO much more than that. If you were to take an experienced artist and a beginner and sit them in front of a lightbox and say "draw away" What do you get? Did the tracing put them on equal footing? Not hardly. Drawing is about thinking and editing and showing how you see. The skill of the artist is not disguised by having traced something. I have said it before, Drew Struzan and Norman Rockwell TRACED photos in their work. Rockwell did later in his career, and it was logical to do so. Same thing with Struzan. Does it diminish slightly my respect for them? NO. Their work is beautiful, always was and will be.

Another point is that using a photo is very obvious; almost to the point of why mention it. If you think you are fooling anyone, think again. But as I say above, it is so not the point that you used a photo or any other reference or even

traced it. What is there in your image? What did you do with it? That is where the art lies.

I can understand that if you are just starting out and are having trouble drawing even an accurate silhouette of something, that alone seems like a monumental achievement. But give yourself credit, you will learn it pretty soon, and how to get your media to do exactly what you want. It's just not that difficult for anyone even moderately serious. Then what do you do?

But, I DO think that using a photographers work, to take what that artist has done and re-present it as something new is as bad as copying another's painting and presenting it as your own. You see some really nicely lit and cropped and art directed photos of a ballerina with the light hitting her face just right? Copy it and don't change it much you are doing something wrong. How much do you have to change it? That's up to the court to decide, legally, but practically, why would you want to do something that someone even has to ask a question about? That is pretty sad.



couldnt resist either. Trying to think like Isric.

Do you need to put more objects in it or maybe just refine what is already there? not like I did.

I think any new genre has to be followed and you have to see how "deep" it is. Someone must keep it alive and continue moving it forward. I guess the

photomanip has not been moving forward as much as some would like. Drawing and painting is a very deep ocean, it is endless what can be dreamt and done when you start from a blank canvas.

I have always looked at digital as a new tool to use. The distinction between traditional and digital has some, but not a lot of meaning. As I have explored digital and gained more control of it, the distinction lessens. But I agree, a big beautiful oil painting is something that you just cannot experience with digital.

I first bought a computer to scan in color roughs and play with them to try many possibilities before committing to a larger painting. You can still use it this way. I will probably always use it this way, at the very least. Traditional work is still my preference, for myself. But for commercial work, digital is the only way to go.

Freddie,

All things are composed of atoms, which if I remember, are roughly spherical. Sorry, could not help it. 99% percent of what you paint can be simplified into the basic forms. This helps you think about how to paint them in an organized way. I have found that the simplified form is usually the most interesting, to me. The trick is to figure out what to keep and what to throw away. Your decisions along these lines are a big part of your identity as an artist.

Oh, I listen to just about everything, I esp. like classical and romantic music from about 1790 to 1930. Debussy and Wagner are big favorites.

I think Glen Keane makes about 300k a year, with many perks. Want to live in France a year with the whole family? No problem.

As many other animators are finding out, the animation market is drying up somewhat. So you can be unemployed or rich, in the same field, depending on who you are.

My solution is to diversify as much as I can. If one area has a slowdown, do something else. It is a lot more interesting as well.

But one piece of advice I will give you- If you go into a field and your motivation is money, you will not make it far, and you will get your ass kicked by the competition because they are doing it for the love of it. You won't be able to maintain the interest and motivation required to reach the upper ranges of the chosen area. You are guaranteeing that you will... not make much money.

So doing what you like has many advantages.

Asking and selling are two different things.

Also, if you take the agent, gallery and taxes out, you are working for 30 cents on the dollar.

And again, technical facility is not directly related to its value in art. Value is determined by a whole bunch of things, not the least of which is people able and willing to pay for it. Present market value can change dramatically for many reasons.

I think if you really want to make money, do what Thomas Kincaid did. Whatever you may think of the art, he is a genius at marketing. That is as important an aspect of art as any other.

I think the gesture needs to loosen up a little. Also, the down angle begs to have a third vanishing point.

The eyes form more of a slit when grimacing. Yours look like either makeup or a very strange expression. The corners of the mouth pull up and back. Where's Fred when you need him?

Get a mirror and keep it handy. very useful to, as Frazetta said, "check things out."

You can hold back your lightest light until you need it. In mine the back leg has a lot less light on it, making it go back. Yours have the same intensity to them.

A new thread for this?

I did this in 96, I think. At that time, lens flares were not the hunted animals they seem to be now.

Is it bad if it's appropriate? It is not an evil thing in itself.

Being easy to use does not make it off-limits, but being easy to use invites abuse.

So, yes, this cool thing has been soiled through abuse and overexposure. Is that my fault? I suppose I should go through my archives and paint them all out because of other peoples lack of restraint.

This is what I was talking about in the other thread. What other aspects of my work will go this way?

The easiest and most obvious aspects of my work I do see around. But hopefully, I am not just a limited bag of simple tricks. My confidence in that is why I am not too uptight about the whole thing.

About Thomas Kincaid...

and plush dolls, push-up pops, bedspreads, nightlights, play make-up heads, key chains, toothbrushes, mugs, mouse pads, bicycle helmets, TV-dinner trays, T-shirts, pajamas, coloring books, paint-by-number sets, jigsaw puzzles, glow-in-the-dark stickers, videogames, interactive read-along CD-ROM adventures...

He does stuff a little like that snow scene I did over in the other forum. Very schmaltzy, little English cottages with the lights on inside. He is billed as "the painter of light," both I suppose from the Vaseline covered lens look of the paintings to the fact that he puts Bible verses on them.

He is IMMENSELY popular in the American Midwest.

I have a friend who roomed with him at Art Center. Said he did better work then, mostly western book covers.

If you go into many malls around the country you will see he has his own shops. Thomas Kincade galleries devoted to his work alone. The prints (the originals must be in fort Knox or with goldfinger) are low quality canvas textured cardboard. There are several levels of prints, however...

Bear with me...

The executive level- straight prints \$1000

The monogram level, on better cardboard \$2000

The premiere level, prints in which a real person put some paint right of the tube on some of the omnipresent flowers. \$5000

The executive monogram level- where individuals actually OK'ed by Thomas Kincade do the "highlighting" \$10000

The executive monogram premiere perpetual eternal orgasmatron level. The master, Mr. Kincade, actually sneezed in a room adjacent to where the prints might have been at one time stored. No, it's even better, Mr Kincade, the painter of light, TOUCHED the holy prints with his own brush. Thusly breathing life into a once inanimate cardboard, this is worth, well, how much ya got? \$100,000.

So Chalker, it's a much brighter world after all.

Hmm.. orgasmatron is not in my spell checker.

So I do feel there is genius afoot here somewhere. Millions of people have earthshaking aesthetic experiences looking at his work, so there has to be something there. But yes, the real art is the marketing, the conceptualization of how to promote this work. Both things have to be there.

OMG, Rowan, you sprouted mandibles in the last few days. Congrats! Hey, where's that wooden pull toy you were gonna do?



Don't know why I did this. Thanks Joachim for the idea of doing a painted cartoon. Never tried it before, but it was fun.

Blitz, his head is turned at an angle. See the nose and the distance from the edge of the eye socket to the edge of his face? They are very different on each side. This is something you want to exaggerate instead of underrate. Also check the angle of the mouth. Really look at the shape of the face and what that is telling you about the form of the skull.

This looks nice flush.

There are two ways to get this to look big.

1) exaggerate the atmospheric perspective. Quick and dirty and effective. Hide it all in low contrast.

2) make everything perfect. Perfect drawing, values, everything. Seems obvious and you say, I would if I could, but no eyeball perspectives, get the exact diminishing scale on everything. And objects of this size and complexity have a large number of different types of materials and details. You have to do each one and think about each one.

That is really hard. How do you show the difference between marble and brick at 2 miles?

This is really one of the tougher subjects to do well. Keep at it, all the other comments I see make sense to me. And leave that fisheye alone. It's a photographer's trick that will just make things 5 times harder.

edit. hmm just saw the link to that toyota tower thing. There is another one looking up a huge column that is a much better painting and is more applicable to this subject and angle. That tower one is too hazed-client request. I did it with no atmosphere at first and it looked better.



This is the guy who beat up on me in high school. He's working in a car wash now, and look at me! I hang out on the internet! Some things never change

I don't do much with pencil on paper in the way you might think of design concept stuff. I would rather just paint it. Just a different way of presenting ideas. I might try that style soon, though.

I do know Eric Chauvin, we go way back actually. But i have only met him a couple of times. He did the compositing on that capitol dome project for

contact.

There are a lot of people here from the frozen north, from all longitudes

Hey, I did a few women recently! One is really still in progress, but the other one seemed to go over OK.

Car design sketches are supposed to show the 3-d form of the car, so modelers can build it. Can you lay section lines over your cars? Always a good check. It is a little different than illustration.

So that worms eye view is not always the best, unless you are practiced. Better to draw from a higher angle with a little wider lens to show near and far better.

Draw through the forms, always start transparently, and use centerlines to make the car symmetrical. Draw the plan view of the car projected to the ground all the way around. Think of the wheels as cylinders that go all the way through the form

Glass should not be at an angle of greater than about 70 degrees from vertical. It gets heavy and opaque, not practical.

The wheels need some rubber! If you run over a chewing gum wrapper the strut will go through the fender.

I know you have probably seen design sketches that have the rounded form and then an ellipse guide thrown on for the tire and wheel, but it is not practical. I know, I like to do that stuff too.

As far as the reflections go, start with the basic shape, an egg, what would the reflections look like? Then distort the reflections to match your car form.

A good tool to use nowadays is build it in 3-d and draw from that. You will find subtle stuff that you might have missed. In your top car, in plan view, it is elliptical. The back glass does not go around that shape. It looks like it goes

back to a sharp corner.

It is good you are throwing in some functional details, like door cuts and handles, but maybe make them a little less prominent.

Usually this style of drawing is very clean, with a minimum of texture. That will help make it shiny. Contrast helps too.

The top car is good because you caked off of the contrast to show a light colored finish. The glass, however, you can punch up, and show the difference in material.

Don't get too frustrated with this style, though. The drawings that designers do are the product of having done several hundred thousand that are just like it. They get amazingly good at them.

This is not instructional in any way. Yours is cool. I just liked the subject and your approach and thought I would try it. Looks like the Flying Dutchman.



Working from middle out is generally correct, but "general" to "specific" is more correct. Think of it this way, I am trying to reverse the process of a very large blur. What is a painting that is blurred like this? A block in! Art Geek riddle.

So the idea is to get the big areas to what they will be in the end as soon as possible. This means you can start with relationships right away. This applies with color, too.



Glad you all like this one! I like it too. It has simplicity in form and shape that I would like to go further with.

Chris, I would like to try sequentials at some point, but correct me if I am wrong, you are referring to the actual pages in a comic that tell the story? I

guess it would require a lot of work, which I am allergic to I think in 1 or two years my drawing will be up to it.

I wasn't too concerned about the anatomy, as fat people are a study in

themselves. But if it bothers the eye, it is wrong. He does have long arms. The idea behind the lack of texture on the belly is to show it is stretched drum tight, and to play up the dirtiness of the rest of him. I should have rendered some very fine spider veins in the belly to make it even more disgusting.

There is one huge mistake, or rather something I did not take advantage of, in the shape of the belly and the draping of the cloth. How sloppy

Light, I did the reverse on purpose.

Settle, cappy, I'm not the one who is 19 doing this stuff. I should be freakin out, not you

Micke, I started with a scan of an old oil painting. So is it live or is it...



Thanks one and all for the comments. I am glad to see that there is just straightforward honesty here. Ya like, ya don't like, and why.

I am glad that there are fewer "it's all scribbly" comments. That must mean I am getting better at this kind of thing.

Haha the hands cropped. I have arguments with people whose brains ossified years ago around some rule of composition or "picture making." This is exactly the kind of thing they would say, "the hands are tangent to the edge and it feels weird! Bad!" Learn every "rule" you can and then try to break them, one at a time.

The elongation of the figure was of course very intentional. J's looks pretty similar, I have trouble telling them apart, but I guess that means mine wasn't that far off .

The head and its relation to the shoulders can be very expressive. I imagine her gesture to be that there is tremendous tension and emotion going on, and her blank expression contrasts with the jutted chin and thrust back shoulders. Tension is often carried unconsciously in the neck and shoulders. If you judge the length of the neck by the shoulder joint, it can be deceiving, because the shoulder is so mobile. The neck is too, and that is why it is so much fun to twist it around. But as I have always said, if it looks wrong to you, it is wrong. I think I pushed it a little too far, J's is better.

Yes, Jezebel, that is what I was after.

The other thing I should have done if I wanted to go with the bird neck is to elongate the head a little bit more. Then it would have been more internally consistent.

I like that idea gecko about the weight of the blood, but no wet t-shirt contests please The strokes of the dress are vertical, that goes with the elongation.

Oh, I see chapel. The part in the hair is not centered? Yes, sloppy. She does have a very pronounced brow, another no-no for women

As far as the detail, that is one reason why I like to post here. How much is to little? Is it to tell a story, give a feeling, show a gesture or explicate anatomy? All three have their place. So I just get an overall feeling from what people say

and it all goes to further my experience as to what is appropriate. Some think this is enough, others want more finish.

I am off overseas for 3 weeks starting Monday.

I did some painting in High School 16-18 YO, not very successful. I got bad grades in art, but I still liked it. I did nothing until after a few semesters at art center while enrolled in product design. ACCD was my Dad's idea, thinking it would join my earlier interest in art and a fascination for mechanical things. I started painting again in third semester, hmmm, that would have been 22 Y.O. I switched to illustration at 24 Y.O. and have been working like mad since.

I sorely feel those lost six years I did not touch a pencil. Life is really short and there is an endless amount to learn.

A lot of people look at Sargent as degenerate, the triumph of technique over content. The comedy of painting what is the equivalent of a dude in a Porsche with a lot of money in the style of Gainsbough is something to be seen. Everything evil about the 19th is nicely documented in his Sargent's body of work.



Arrrr. This one was starting to go down the drain the way that that girl in the window went. I get tight and try to "finish" something and it all goes to hell. This one looked better as a sketch. Hey, I still have those, here



sleep... that's when I'm a Pirate!

On more general topics I got my site back up after a month of being down. The dweebs who agreed to host it pulled the plug right when I could do nothing about it. No warning, nuthin.

Final Fantasy is done (my part). 3-d lovers will need oxygen to see this and survive. My part is Very Minor, the 3-d stuff is the movie.

Am going to see parents tomorrow, so look up my address on whois and come over and help yourself. I gotta fix that.

Sorry, should have posted earlier, i answer you all wed, i am not home right now.

It's a mutiny! i screwed up! The cappy comes down and finds the dagger imbedded in the post. he holds it and as he does this he thinks that it's not the best idea. Trap.

Shows how much i need to figure out narrative. Sigh

There is one (only one?) huge error in perspective. I will never tell.

AS far as what is going on, I do think it is good to choose to illustrate a point in a story at which anything could happen. Here the penny is about to drop. The way I imagined it, the cappy is lured below deck, and the mutineers need him to stand in a particular spot (to drop a 10 ton weight on him). They put a dagger sticking out of a beam, something sure to get his attention. He goes over and has just reached the dagger and is about to pull it out when he thinks he hears something... he then senses that all exits are blocked.

As you can see from the sketches, this evolved as the painting did. Initially he was just strolling along, oblivious.

I am relatively happy with the heads, they are done from my head. I am improving with that.

Eric, that's a good eye about the scale of the dude in the back. You are

absolutely right.

A buttle, I plead the 5th on that star wars thing

Burnout, I will not be speaking anywhere, if I can help it.

Enayla, I liked that feather too. It kicked my ass for the longest time, then it just *pop-ed* together.

Anthony, the first idea I had with this was the filtered light coming through a latticework. It all degenerated from there.

Scoop, if you are having trouble with those damn round brushes, don't leave them showing. I never get a shape or stoke right at first, so paint over it again, but paint the surrounding shape over the first. This covers the round ends on the strokes and gives your shapes much more variety.

It's scribble time



It is fun to be back and doing little sketches like this all night long. I wish people would pay me to do this instead of.. you know.

I have no idea if you think this is an improvement, but if you do, I think you need to drop the activity of a lot of the textures in the shaded areas.

Think of contrast in more ways than just light and dark. Straight and curved, flat and textured, soft and hard edge, etc.

I played up the shapes a little more than I should of to make the point and because this is the quickest way to make something interesting.

I did drop the ambient light, so there are just the two side sources. The secondary source is also a little cooler. Again that's a difference to play up. You don't have to go that dark with fill, but I did to make certain areas go flatter to make my point about contrast of flat and textured.

The drawing is a little wacked all over, nothing big, but enough to make you unsettled. I changed the head shape to show the off center viewpont You head silhouette was pretty symmetrical.

Don't loose corners of forms, or shapes. They get doughy and soft very easily. Then it looks mushy everywhere and the drawing is easy to loose.

I started in product design, but I did much better in my trans classes. I did some hard time at Ford, decided that was not IT and came back and started illustration from 3 out of 8 semesters. Ugh. The final 4 semesters of ill were worse than useless.

Ozy, be very careful, illustration at ac will not teach you traditional drawing and painting. ID will actually come much closer, if they have not buggered the

program (my guess is this has happened). I know that the illustration program has gone away from traditional skills, but then again, the chairman who did all that has recently retired. So who knows, but check it out very carefully.

If you go to Fred's school, beware that the training you get will be very narrow. There is a lot of stuff that you should know that you would not get there. It is great for a very traditional style of illustrative painting, but that style is not selling as illustration these days. Be very aware that this is happening. As much as what the atelier teaches is exactly what art center lacks the reverse is also true. AC is a much wider program and you will be introduced to a lot of stuff that you may never have known existed.

So either place, you have to be on the ball enough to fill in the gaps. Go to atelier, learn 3-d. perspective, mechanical objects and design, 20th century art and its influence on art and design, etc. Go to art center, you must fill in a LOT of missing figure drawing, head drawing and mucho painting.

I am going to the atelier in thousand oaks quite a bit now. Draw from life.

Where things go into shadow, keep the values closer together, not so much light and dark.

Where you have airbrushed the larger forms turning from light to shadow try to keep in mind the radius of the forms you are describing. Ex. the chin. You have the edge of the jaw and the chin as one tube-like radius. The chin has a smaller radius than the back of the jaw, so it should be reflected in the rendering. The same goes for the other big forms of the head.

I think this is what you are reacting to when you want painter. Fix these areas and I think it won't feel as smooth and mechanical.

Watch the darker halftones and bright highlights, makes her look shiny (greasy) unless that's what you wanted Pretty girls generally get played up as matte

This was done from a picture in a history textbook. It was a little bronze statue that had such a neat helmet that it just drew itself.



Something is copyrighted as soon as it has "tangible form." An old trick that might not work anymore is to make something, put it in an envelope and mail it to yourself. The postmark is legally acceptable. Not sure why.

There are international variations that Enayla has pointed out. I have seen some stuff in Japan that would have been actionable in the states, but not there.

I wonder if it ever becomes criminal? Now you can sue and win if you can show damages, but that is a long road.

1)perp has to have money

2)you have to prove damages from said theft

3)you have to prove it was lifted (if they changed it a little you have problems)

4)if all of the above goes well, you have to collect, and evil minded fellows are usually good at hiding assets.

5)Spending thousands on a lawyer to pursue this thing makes it difficult if you can show profit when money is collected.

Usually what happens is you play chicken with them. "I have more money and time than you and I will drain your pockets to defend yourself." So it is usually settled out of court. Sometimes with lead pipes

From Gotterdammerung. The three fates sit and spin the rope of gold, basically retelling the story up to this point in case you could not handle the three previous nights. They are sitting on Brunnhilde's rock, which was surrounded by fire placed by Wotan. Siegfried and Brunnhilde are up on the rock in a cave having sex.

I think there are supposed to be three different ages, young middle and old. I was happy I was able to suggest this without hitting you over the head with it.

This type of pointillist technique is a fun diversion. It can be pretty and suggestive and you don't have to worry too much about a lot of the forms and surfaces. Really a lot easier. Give it a try.

Nori, I was thinking about your question about color and shadows and light temperature. The secret is, if the drawing is correct and the values are correct, you can do just about anything you want. Remember that value makes the form read and color is an independent variable. You can go nuts if you want, and you should sometime, just to underscore the lesson in your mind. Maybe I could cook up an exercise if there is interest.

That said, let me say that 95% of the work I see lives or dies on the strength of the drawing. It is hard work, but it will pay off. Drawing from life is the best way to learn it well. Drawing from photos makes you copy shapes, not internalize the forms and interpret them, which is the basis for a lot of naturalistic art. Draw from photos as a convenience, yes, but don't make a steady diet of it. Try not to let yourself fall into relying on the flat shapes you see in photos. You will cripple yourself. Photos are great for information about form.



more inspired by Gerome than the movie...



Here's the drawing that I started with



Faustgfx, I don't think there is a linear progression in my work from loose to tight, if that even means anything. This is much more defined than that norn pictures, but much looser than the pirate thing. I guess to answer you I feel that painting looser is also a way of finding out what is important in an image and leaving the rest out. I think things have more impact that way. That is, if I do it right, which I don't always do. If I mess up, it reads as an unfinished sloppy picture. If it is right, it will be much nicer than an image that depends on hard edges and details and noodling for it's appeal. But I think ultimately, I want to do images that have the gesture, the simplification, the design, and also the craft. But to me, to make an image attractive with just a few larger shapes is

MUCH harder than rendering something to death. That requires patience. Good, loose painting requires experience and knowledge and experience. That is why I am doing a lot of them, and I am doing the 500 images as well.

There is also an element of entertainment if I paint looser. It talks back to me and that dialog takes the image to places that it would have never have gone if I had been more methodical.

I am still learning about how to exaggerate proportions and gestures. The forward arm and leg are impossibly stretched, and that was intentional. But I did not do it right if it bothers that eye. So much work to do and so much to learn. Generally, when elongating the figure, the lower you go on the figure the more elongation there is. The head is left alone, the torso a little longer, the thigh longer still and the blow knee really long. I was after the gesture here, not really the anatomy. It seems like half bought it and half did not. That is a failing grade maybe it is just a matter of amount, but nothing is that simple. I agree the shield should not be viewed dead on.

I think I may start selling Glicee prints. I have held back the high rez files for just such a purpose. Signed limited editions or some BS like that. But it would help out I guess.

Eric, I will mail you

I am averaging about 500-700 MB per day, and I have about 40 MB on line. I don't know if this is a lot, I am sure it is a barely discernable trickle compared to porno sites, but if I judge it on what they are charging me, it's a lot.

Hehe, Waldo, I think you are right. I kill you, you kill me, we are happy familiee...

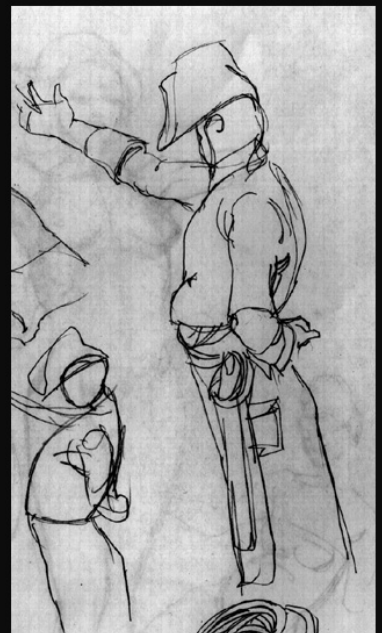
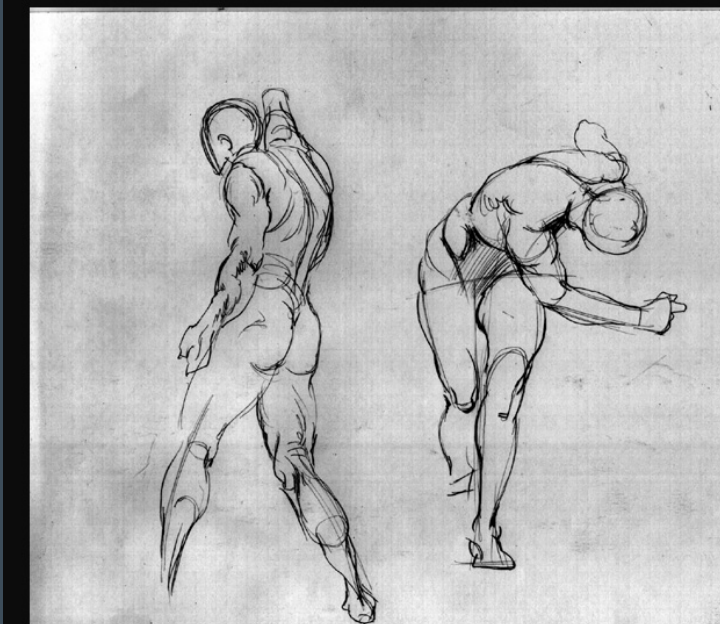
hmm I am a little distressed that everyone does not buy the figure. I think it is the best figure i have done... back to the drawing board.

Either my drawing or my judgement is screwed, or a little of both. But can you have one without the other?

I do these while absorbing verbal abuse from art directors on the phone.

Keep in mind that I suck at drawing like this, I cannot make a pretty drawing to save my life, never could. I have started doing them again after joining this forum and in the spirit of working your weakest link. So don't laugh too hard. None are from life, but I think one is from a Mucha painting.

I am trying to think of more apologetic excuses, but I can't do that either.



By chance I found myself in a sculpture class. Don't ask how I got there. I have always thought that sculpture would help drawing, but I see that I underestimated how much. So my suggestion is to get some sculpey and some tools, a mirror or an anatomy book and whack away. It will help you so much. (I know you are probably saying "so you are never gonna butcher a nose ever again, eh? I'll be watching and measuring...")

I think this may be for the pros here, though, or if you are very serious and plan to develop your art over a long period of time. If you are really having trouble with basics, maybe your time is best spent on those basics. But the rest of you, you don't know what you are missing.

I agree with others experiences with sculpting. My drawing and painting has helped me start at a higher level than I might have otherwise.

My Mom has gotten into pottery quite a bit, and has a completely set up gas AND electric kiln. If I ever do anything worth keeping, that is a real convenience.

I think most sculptures in the movies use sculpey, as it can be baked and has no wall thickness problems, and will not crack. It is also pretty stiff, and will hold detail well. Oil based clay will never dry, and is pretty soft, in my limited experience.

Armatures are a pain in the ass. I just had a thought, though. Make the armature out of sculpey and bake it... That should work for the easier stuff.

Try sculpey, Micke, might work, but I am not sure what you have in mind.

Looks good Francis. Now raise the ambient a little so we can see the rest of the figure. Not too much, maybe just some really big shapes that could even be differences in local value and materials within the suit.

You are still thinking “logically” about the white wall structures in the middle ground. Would you see every turn of the forms or would some be lost? That is one of the hardest things about painting from your head. Some changes of form are really lost and you can simplify them into bigger shapes, with little or no indication of how they join. You did this great in the figure, maybe a little too much. Painting from life, or even photos can help with learning how to simplify.

I first started to transition to digital commercial work in 94. I remember driving into LA to set up a clients AOL account so they could see WIP. I really think they had images in their head of bouncing chrome spheres on a chessboard and plastic figures.

Digital artist? Oxymoron?

Really I have not had anyone say anything about it for a few years now. Usually they don't care how it was done, or if they find out they don't believe me. But when they see they can play with it forever, then they are sold.

You know the "taste level" of most commercial jobs. The shinier and more contrasty the better.

Illustrators looking down on digital artists, that's a good one. Wait till I steal the light bulb from their Luci and we will see... Even among circus freaks there is a social order

I remember that Joachim and Micke were trying to stump each other on their weak points, and this is one of mine. I have been working hard at figures, but not drawings like this. L99ReIm, this is not a suggestion, just my attempt at doing something that might lead to my thinking about starting to do anything about linework and pencil drawing. Amano's work does catch my eye a lot, too, he clearly has a fashion drawing background.

L99, you need a bigger ref pic than that, so you can see what is going on and abstract it from there. This is what I got out of it, so don't just copy the graphic shapes, look at the forms. Eventually you will make a delicate looking, masculine figure like I think you want, but it will take time and thousands of drawings.

But keep going! you are doing great!



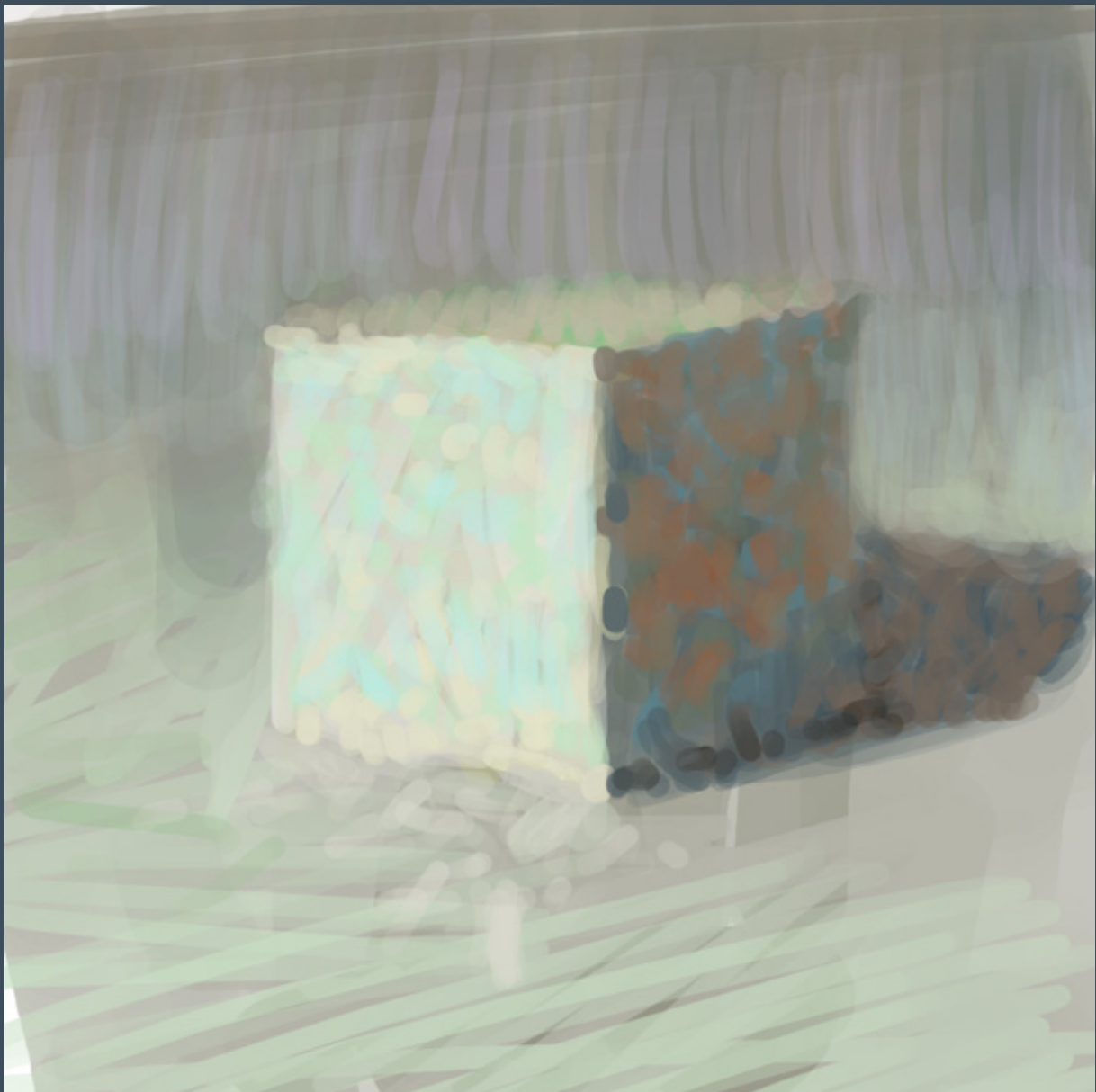
This reads as a cube because the values are kinda in the right places. But if you identify which colors are where, you see that it is pretty random. An orange and a blue work together because they are the same value.

I hope this shows the separate natures of value and color? Hope it is clear...

This is a simple setup because of the relatively neutral light source, and simple flat white local colors of the surface and the cube. It can get more complex and difficult to control, but the idea is the same. There are also differences in evening and morning natural light in the outdoors, etc.

Another way to see value and color as separate is to just desaturate it (best is to convert to LAB and look at the brightness channel) and see if your forms read OK.

The older trick was a laser zerox.



There aren't any "warm light always have cool shadows" rules that are absolute. In a relative sense, two grays next to each other can be either warmer or cooler in relation to each other. It is important to remember that it is VERY relative.

I think that the human eye relates to a warmer light and cooler shadow the best because a warm sun and a cool diffuse sky by chance exaggerate this system. In a lab, the warm/cool difference is perceptual, and not nearly as strong. You can break it any time you want and not have it interfere with the forms reading well.

Value- how light or dark it is.

Hue, color- the red, green, blue component

Saturation- how intense a hue is

They are independent variables. Play around with Photoshop's HSB sliders; you will get the hang of it.

For instance, there is no such thing as brown. It is really a dark red. Earth tones are just dark yellows and reds.

I have always been a little too analytical, and I think that you can break down problems in painting into different areas. Drawing, values, color, in that order. Get each right. They can overlap, ex. If a value is wrong on a receding cheek, the cheek structure looks wrong. Is it a value or drawing problem? Well, both. In the same way, make a gray scale of your image and see if the values are reading OK.

Many people tell me their painting needs zip or life, but these things come from solid basics.

The exercise I was alluding to a while back was from my color theory with Judith Crook. She devised a neat exercise where you take photos of the same place (a complex space with a good variety of textures and materials- architecture is good) in direct morning and evening light. You then paint them, but try to exaggerate the differences between the two lighting conditions. It is

a great exercise, feel free to try.

The photo question is such a popular one. I have talked about it a lot, but I will paraphrase again.

Photos cannot be a substitute for life drawing and painting. Remember when you went behind the old barn as a kid to blow up some spray paint cans in a bonfire? You told you mom you were, um, going to help ladies cross the street. How did she know you were not being straight with her?

Likewise with experienced artists. Paintings done from photos where the artist has limited experience in painting from life scream this from 1000 miles away. But the artist thinks he had the blinds pulled that day. How do they know? Everyone knows. And it is not bad- IT DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU DO WITH IT. Is it a literal and dumb transcription of the limitations of film stock? Or is it the basis for something further? That is up to the individual to decide what it is, and what value it has. And being able to go further is provided by working from life.

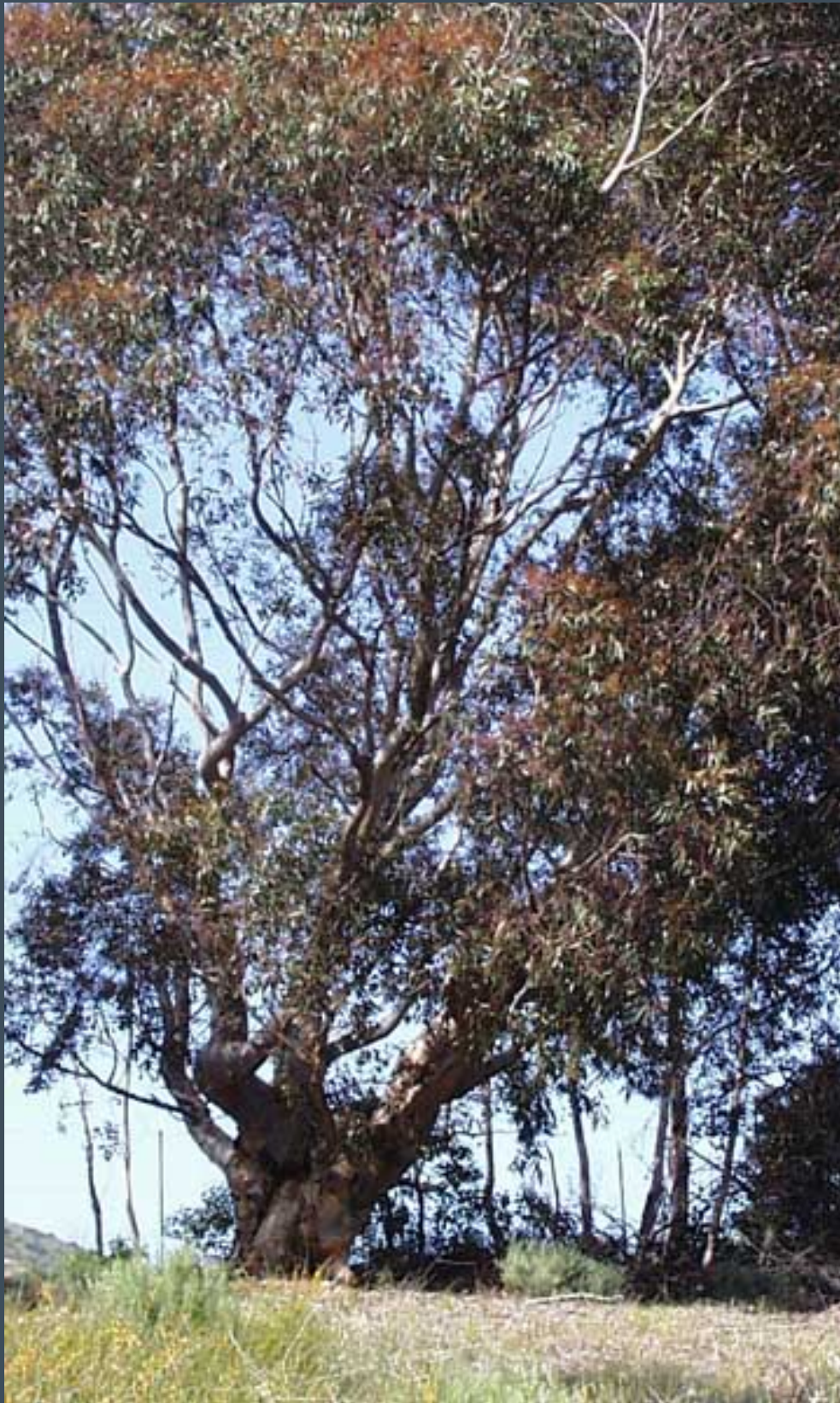
But sooner or later, if you do art long enough, you will grow very bored and restless with the photo stuff. What more is there? When you are starting and wrestling with controlling the medium, you think if you can get it to look like that photo, you have succeeded. Well, you have! I did this when I was first learning (don't tell synj). But art is a lot more than that, and when you draw from life and let the photos go, you will see a lot more possibilities in art. You will never be bored again.

Another thing I have said and people don't believe me is a beginning artist and an experienced one can trace a photo and the experienced artists will look much better. GETTING AN ACCURATE OUTLINE IS A SMALL PART OF GOOD DRAWING. Sorry for the screaming. You must see the form and express it after internalizing it. If you are not standing in front of an object, you cannot perceive its form. Photos are flat. They have their place, esp. to an illustrator, but be careful of using them INSTEAD of a lot of life drawing.

I think the old way of drawing from plaster cast at first is a great way to start, then to the model. Then, after a long while, you will be able to look at photos and pull info out of them without being a slave to the flat shapes.

And colors and exposure latitude. Here is a photo and a sketch done on

location. The photo did not see what I saw. I will use the photo for drawing and shapes perhaps, but I am glad I was there to get what the camera could not.





I like it overall; it is great being out of your head.

My only general comments are to watch how much texture, activity and contrast that you put into an area that is really in shadow. That is most of what I did in this sketch. Also, look at the indication of windows, most are recessed, and the dark line shows not only the recession but also the reflection of the recession in the glass. So keep the dark line on the far side of the windows. If you put it on the close edge, it will read as the glass being on the same plane as the wall.



I did this before the forum went down again, and now I want it off the desktop here.

stneil, using poser is ok if you are really unsure about your drawing, but maybe the first step is to get rid of it entirely, cover it up with other things, as it really screams through almost anything. Just keep it on a layer for ref, or just have it side by side like you did with your Bruce Lee Picture 😊 That really would be best, then there is nothing 3-d in your painting at all. This is not a horrible thing, but the two universes are so far apart that you might want to just make them separate from the start.

And start thinking about how you are going to wean yourself from poser. Gotta be done sometime...

The other thing is to resist the temptation to make every form go from very dark to very light. I know that when you put a light on an area it is so much fun that it is easy to overdo it. Gouache highlights on marker renderings have this a lot. Start in the middle, with bigger shapes, and let the thing emerge from the grey. Hold back your darks and your lights until the very end, and you will see that you don't need to make that many highlights.



The tank is a little too small. I assume we are standing at 6FT, it looks like we are looking right at the German soldier's eyes and we are looking down at his feet. If you draw an eye level here, and also assume that the street is mostly level, then everything that falls on that line is also at 6 ft. In fact, you can find the size of any object in an image if you know the size of one thing. So the gun mount looks like it is a little low.

Other than that, try to hold back your lights a little more. I know it is fun to put white on every form, but try to get it to read without doing this, you will get much further in the end. Look at the foreground soldier's helmet, and the cracked wall. They have the same value in the light. If there is a very strong side

or backlight it could blow out like this, but I don't feel this from other elements in the scene.

More pirates!



Hehe, I started out on this forum doing paintings like this and about half of the replies were of puzzlement. "It's sloppy! Why don't you finish this?" Either I am getting better at it (I hope) or people are getting used to it? I think I am getting better at it, and that was the idea. I think I am isolating what is important and eliminating the rest, but I am also making the surface more and more complex, but in control. I am about 80 percent happy with this, which is better than I have been doing in the past.

Axo, The shadow and lights come from thinking clearly about the form and the lighting condition that is present. Drawing from life a lot is the best way to get this under your skin.

Speed3d, Yes, this is the tightrope I have been feeling- what do I get with the loss of explicit form? Like the French Impressionists, I have been after an effect of light and an environment, sometimes at the expense of drawing and form. Sometimes I go too far.

Gimbal, Thanks for seeing the concern for balance, I hope it is balanced in many ways. Yes, those Sargent notes make more and more sense with every re-reading, and the more you know, the more they make sense. But also see that even Sargent acknowledges there are many ways to go about things.

Frost, I had in mind that the ship was tilting, maybe I should have made a few

more recognizable shapes that would tell the eye that this was so, so everything would reinforce each other.

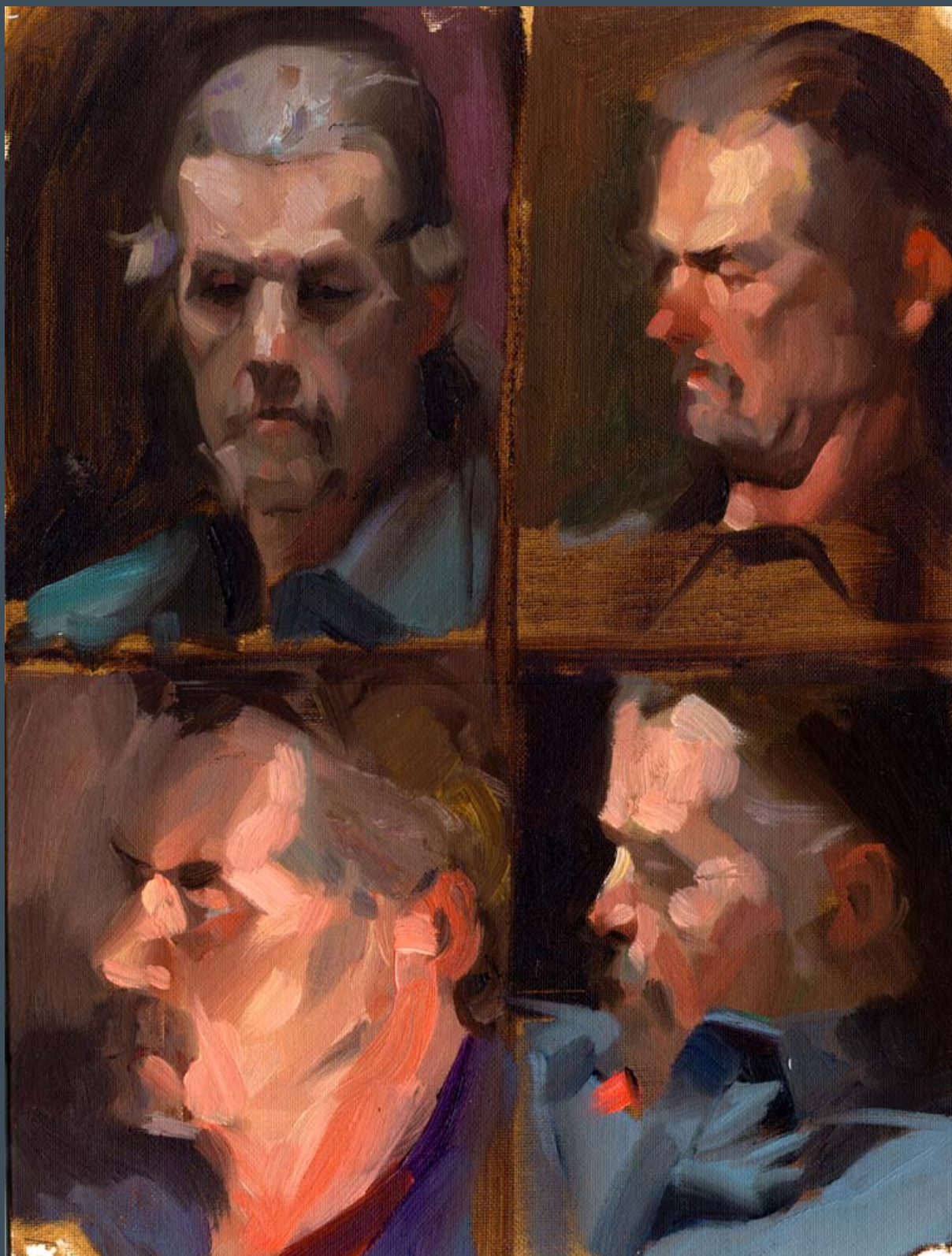
I hafve always been able to set up a value system, that came easy, everything else is a pain and I had to fight for it, and still am.

Gambit, Glad you like the pics, but don't think these are accurate in any sense. Just a feeling is all am after, like a bad movie or something.

Palladia- yes you can see the printing texture very clearly. It is a scan from a magazine of some flowers

Anj77 spontainiosity? Cool word. With these sketches I work with the BG layer and then a working layer. I paint for 10 minutes, switch the working layer on and off, see if it looks better or worse, and either merge or delete depending on the verdict. I paint this way since I sometimes fall back into bad habits and paint dumb. Gotta stay sharp and focused.

I have been doing a lot of oil sketches instead of digital stuff lately. It is a lot of fun.



These 4 heads are 20 minutes each study. Painting from life forces you to think carefully about what you are doing, and limiting the time pushes the issue even more. I just wanted to get the main info down, but ya know, I like these better than if I had toyed with it for longer. So lesson, be careful about your first shapes and block-in, make it correct from the start, and look before you paint.

Try the same exercise if you can. Spend as much time looking and thinking as you do scrubbing paint around.

Here is one of those things I do out around the area. This sketch is pretty accurate, that is what was coming through my eyeballs, and that is all I was after. hehe thats the background I painted the knight sketch on!



I am an absolute novice at oil painting. When I did real paintings for a living, it was always with gouache and acrylic. The number of oils I have done is very low. God the stuff is frustrating. You would think that the drawing would be OK despite the change of medium, but if you cant control the paint, NOTHING is correct, from drawing to values to color. It's all screwed. These are my first baby steps into this most amazing universe of oil paint. No other medium has the strength of color, the range of technique and the extreme value range (yum) as oil paint. That is why I am going there, but it is so intimidating to go

where giants have been.

The abstract quality of the work is just as much a subject of the work as what you would traditionally think of as the subject. It is about paint, and the nature of the physical object that you are producing. Every great painting, whether naturalistic or abstract, is a beautiful object. It is a subtle point, and maybe an advanced one, but one to think about.

Malorum- They are painted on cheap canvas board. The heads are on the first layer, meaning there is no painting underneath. I am trying to do as many of these as I can, and storage is a big problem, and very few are worth keeping, and I am a cheap bastard, I just gesso over them. Some boards have 3-4 paintings under the surface. The heads are a virgin application of paint, so to speak.

The seascape is also a first application, if I remember, but it does not look it. If you go to Utrecht.com, you will see gallon cans of gesso for very cheap. I trowel that stuff on the board and use the side of a house brush to make that rough texture. It ends up looking like the paint is a lot thicker than it is. But that painting has no turp use in it- it is all "short" paint.

Collismo, Yes, I was only partly successful with what I was seeking there, the bottom two, esp the jaw area of the bottom left, are not clear. Clarity and simplicity was what I was after, always, and these are a little short. Actually the seascape was done the day after I had painted the same rock with disastrous results, but doing it allowed me to think through the problems and do it again the next day much better.

These are from the model. I generally work a lot out of my head, but the only thing that allows this is having done so many of these in the past (though not with oils) As to your other question, I am thinking and looking, hard to do both at the same time. Relying on raytracing to show form and lighting are just not enough. If you like my work well enough to ask about it, trust me enough to tell you that you are crippling yourself by not using nature to learn. Secrets? That's the biggest one right there.

Daryl, My advice is to slow down. The fewer strokes and shapes, the more accurate and well thought out the must be. So when you start, draw the big shapes slowly and accurately. You will be surprised how far along you get very quickly.

It's Fred! Did you get the check? Yes, these are done at calabassas, the seascape done on my own. I have not tried longer poses with a head in oil, I would love to. It would be a whole new thang. I think I am inclined to work as quickly as can and still get the main info down more or less correctly. I think I would like to try something like asaro, but what attracts me to his work is the drawing is wonderful, but it is not concerned with finish. So I think a carefully controlled spontaneity (sounds like a contradiction) is what I am ultimately after.

These car drawings are a little different than other kinds of illustrations. They are done strictly to communicate form. That they might have other aesthetic value is coincidental. I like em as art as well. They are also quite the creature of ACCD. The style evolved out of AC in the 50's first done on canson paper with prismacolor, and later with markers on vellum with ground up pastel spread with a lithographers pad. There are many designers who think they are useless. They predominate because so many of the employed car designers were educated at AC. Designers from Europe generally are of the opinion that fancy drawings are a cover for lack of design ability. They prefer just pencils and use profiles or perspective drawings with section lines. They have a point. If the drawings are done to tell a modeler what the designer had in mind, a simple drawing is probably better.

So when you look at your drawing, think if it really is explicit in terms of the form. Is there anywhere that is not clear? Is the car symmetrical? Can you lay section lines over your drawing? Could someone else?

Use sections, draw the far wheel, use many construction lines, use centerlines. Draw the car like it is transparent at first. All these will make the car more solid feeling. Cars are very precise forms, and that aspect should be played up when you illustrate them (if you are after these design-y looking sketches)

But I think what you are after is to get better at these. Well, OK. You have probably seen a few car styling magazines or something similar. What you have

to keep in mind is that the drawings that you are looking at are done by guys who have drawn cars for many years. In some cases they have drawn thousands or tens of thousands of cars. It is hard to describe how good they get at it. I started and quit in a pretty short period of time. So you are saying, "I want to get this good" but how can you get that good at it unless you are willing to do it over and over and over?

Every time I have to do some graphic design I find new respect for graphic designers. I suck so totally at it. Just look at my site to see the proof. I cannot ask a designer for a few tips and expect it will help much. It might, might not.

Your drawings are already at a very high level. To get better you just need to do it more, and follow the few suggestions I made above. But be realistic about how much better you will get, if you are using experienced designer sketches as your standard.

Forgive me if all this is obvious. You are an amazing artist already, and you probably know all this.

Another thing that concerns me is how you did these drawings. Are you mimicking the drawings you have seen or do you really understand what you are seeing? Do you know why the horizon reflection behaves that way? Since you did not go through tons of underpinning education about materials and construction techniques and proportions and reflective forms, it will be more difficult for you to improve. And these things are really complex, I could not even begin to summarize them here.

And this is just about the drawing. Car design is a whole universe all in itself. Like graphic design!

"another pitcher"



I am still learning to exaggerate poses, and I wanted to get the feel of the shoulder blades riding up and in so when the head goes back, the deltoid is right on the ear. And the shoulder armor, I always wondered how you could move your arms with those things on. Maybe this pose is impossible with them. I will have to look more carefully next time I see something like this.

The character is facing left, and the detail is on the left, so what is all that space doing there? I wanted to make it flat and simple and go off into massive space, but I think maybe I could have flopped the figure and done better. I did want the darks on the left. I wanted left to be dark and contrasty, and goes to the right which is just the opposite. One thing that makes an image look "big" is careful value control, but also careful size and scale relationships. This was done a little too quickly. I should have thought it out a little more, then it would have been more convincing, and it would not have required detail to do it.

I don't mind at all when someone takes the time to work over one of my sketches. I was not trained in the figure; this is something I have been working on my own since coming to this forum. I have worked really hard on it, and I am making progress, but I have a long way to go. So I look very carefully at what someone suggests, and I might not always agree with the suggestions, but I appreciate the time and effort that was taken. There are some here who are much better with the figure than I am.

My best critic has always been my Dad. He is not an artist, does not even like art that much. He grunts and says, "leg looks broken" and ambles off. If something in my sketches looks wrong, it is. When I am much better at this, the truth of the drawing will be there for everyone to see, and the percentage of reactions like my Dad's will fall. With this image, some really liked the pose and anatomy and commented on it. Others thought something was wrong. I thought it could be a lot better, but without a model, it was beyond my experience. That some liked it means it is in the right direction.

Some poses and angles are exceedingly difficult, and then to try and simplify it as I did makes it even harder. You have to understand something totally in order to paint it in this manner. You cannot rely on finish or rendering to carry the day. I think that is one of the appealing things about working looser.

I think I need to draw the figure everyday, all day, to make the progress I want. Not sure that is practical, but I will see what I can do. I have toyed with the idea of taking a storyboard job full time for a bit, but I would have to be on site, and the cat gets lonely.

No problem at all, it was not unhappy at all. he still does it, in fact. "man, that shot you did on that movie thing, geez, you could see the duct tape and wires..."

Please do not hesitate to pipe up if you see something in the future, I really don't mind, and if it was something I had not considered, or solved a problem that was kicking my ass, all the better.

Maybe two things help me here-

1) I have had the worst kind of abuse from the art directors. The well-intentioned and useful critiques I get here are a warm bath compared to that. What a challenge to take those suggestions (which you have no choice-you

have to) and still make something that does not suck. That takes... a professional 😊

I had one guy not even think twice before telling me to make the clouds go behind the moon, to "well, you remember your basic design, don't you? I know you illustrators just slept through that one... overlapping shapes to make depth and all that, you know...)

On the other side, I have worked with some really GREAT art directors and Effect Supervisors from whom I have learned an immense amount, and enjoyed working with, and there suggestions were always pretty spot on.

2) I have done enough work and been successful enough at it that I would not take anyone's critique to heart and doubt my overall ability.

I think people that get touchy about crits may not have had these experiences to help them put things in perspective.

I think you are really onto something here! That hi rez horse is just about perfect. Accurate, gestural, effective.

I think what J was saying is true, IMHO, but I would supplement what he said a little. You can have close values and still separate shapes, but you must have low contrast within the shapes. Then they separate. The example below I

exaggerated the fog a bit, which is a good illustration of this idea.

This is not presented as an improvement of what you did, just a thought on a different way to organize space with values (hehe throw a lot of fog in there)

What you have is a broken cloud day, with the foreground and the rider area in sun, but the middle ground in shadow. Maybe try to back off the darks in those two lit areas? Keep what is in light and shadow clearly in your mind.

but I really like both images a lot, even though they are a little different, as mine is, too.



The first thing to do is to get the acrylic white, take it in your dominant hand, carefully move to a trash can and.. drop it . It is useless. Use gouache white or use acrylic gesso. The gouache white works because you almost always mix it with the polymer based acrylic, so it get bound up with that and does not come back up if it were straight gouache. Liquitex gesso is a fine white. What you generally want with a white is bright white and covering power, or opacity. Acrylic white is thin and translucent and will drive you nuts.

Another thing to think about is paint thickness. If you are working on some sort of fine tooth ground (illustration board) and you put down a thick layer of acrylic, it fills in the tooth of the paper and subsequent layers become hard to handle. It is like painting on a plastic bottle. There are techniques where you can do this, like using acrylic to imitate oil paint, but why not use oil if you are going to do that?

The way most illustrators use acrylic is in thin glazes on gessoed or straight illustration board. You do a drawing, as careful as you like and then fix it with something. Then get the board nice and wet and brush on a transparent coat of thinned paint, usually a darker color that will be a unifying base to the whole image. Turn the board on edge and let the water even out the paint, a few runs adds a little interest. If you want to get fancy you can do wet into wet at this point, do fun textures, wild colors, whatever. But the goal is to get the board to a close enough middle value that you can work up the major areas as lights and then just add a few dark accents. The lights are worked up as glazes as well, always thin, this allows control and protects the nice tooth of the board. You go thick and opaque in the lightest areas. Watercolor brushes and synthetic nylons are good brushes to use, but a toothy oil bristle brush can work nicely for textures.

This way of working is with liquitex acrylics, which are translucent. There are other types of acrylics that are more suited to opaque styles more like gouache. Cartoon color in Culver City ca. makes cel vinyl, a very opaque acrylic used for animation cels. I used that quite a bit, it is very matte and reproduces well. Even though it is thick and fills the tooth of the paper somewhat, it has it's own tooth that allows further work. You can glaze over it as well. I did migrate to this from the translucent acrylics toward the end of my paint days. Transparent glazing technique is very time consuming but allows extraordinary control and effects. I am more a direct worker; I think it comes from learning with gouache.

Everyone who has worked with acrylics knows once they dry, they are not coming back. That includes on your series 7 Windsor Newton watercolor brushes, so be careful. But this does create a problem, how do you keep the stuff wet on your palette? If you mix a puddle of paint, and if you are working in the transparent method, a small amount of paint, it starts to dry at the edges of the pile right away. Then you have little bits of dried paint in you brush and on the painting. Yeah. And since you worked long and hard to get that puddle of paint to the perfect viscosity, you don't want to add water to it and ruin the masterpiece on the palette. So what to do...

So, the tried and true trick is to use a butchers tray, one of those enamel ones, but a good Tupperware might work even better, but good luck cleaning it. Take some paper towels and fold them into a long strip, put it at one end of the palette. Get it really wet with clean water. Squeeze out your paint on the towel. It will stay wet as long as the towel is wet. As it dries, just add water to the towel and the water will wick underneath the paint.

What about that paint you were mixing? On the remaining mixing area of your palette, lay down a few paper towels, get them nice and wet. Lay a piece of 100% cotton vellum on the towels. No, it will not rip up. It does have to be 100% cotton vellum, though, anything else will not work. The water wicks it way very slowly through the vellum and raises the humidity on the mixing surface to near 100%, keeping whatever is on the paper at whatever level of viscosity you made it. It really works. Not my idea, old illustrators trick. As with the paint blobs on the towel, add water at the edge and let it wick under the vellum. At the end of the session, put a tray from the school cafeteria over the butcher's tray to keep the water from evaporating. I usually put it in the refrig to keep things just as they were, but you don't have to.

Try the Struzan technique, everyone does at one point or another. It is efficient and fast and really quite adaptable because it really relies on drawing.

1 Gesso ill board. Do drawing to full value, very precisely, but leave out information from upper middle lights upward. The drawing should look like a high contrast drawing, with the lights blown out.

2 Use an airbrush to make general color and gradations. Don't render with it! Do not wipe out your drawing with opaque paint. The paint is the secondary player here to the drawing and the lightest lights that come later.

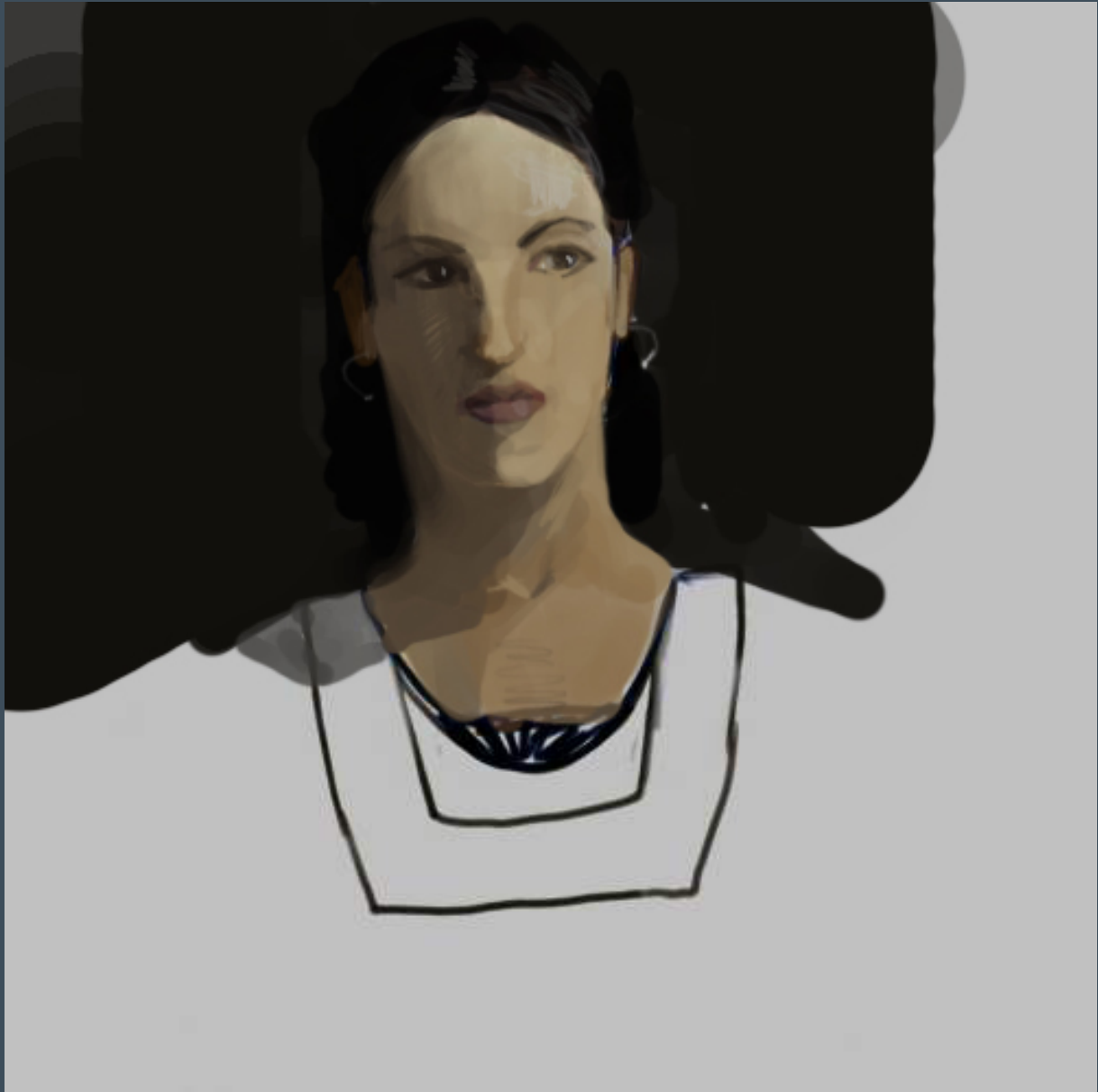
3 Do the rendering and careful halftones with prisma colors or maybe a little paint and brush. Use paint to build up the highlights, as the pencils do not have the covering power needed.

4include in portfolio and get laughed out of every art directors office you go into. It is a shame, his work is quite amazing. It was killed by a flood of inferior imitators that cheapened the value of his work.

See how everything that is in light is one value and everything that is in shadow is another, much darker value? Don't mix them up! That should be the first step after getting the drawing a little closer. You know the neck is too skinny, right? Make it fatter! Not too fat... I worked right on your pixels, and I did not see it was too far off.

But getting the big shapes of light and dark is what you need to work on. if you can't do it from your head, find good photography to look at and figure out what those shapes would be in a given lighting situation.

I am gonna learn to type if it kills me



Take it as a compliment. I have done fine, and the only reason they let me into art center is because my credit was good. After one semester several teachers told me to go do something else with my life. My family was supportive, but a little leery of the idea of me being an artist. I guess they had visions of me showing up with a tin cup every few months.

It made me mad and made me work harder. "I got nowhere else ta go!!!!"

I know it does not tickle right now, but it is meaningless what the admissions

board at art school think. The potential of an person is so much wider than the razor thin prejudices of someone hiding from life in an art school. That is not true of everyone at these schools, but is the rule rather than the exception, unfortunately.

I saw some work recently that set my teeth on edge. You see piles of it streaming out of illustration programs the world over. Generally you see an illustration student use a lot of the figurative distortions of Bacon or DeKooning and throw in a few pop culture references. Art schools and scholarship committees love this stuff! They think it is quite edgy and very creative. The ironic thing is that it is as orthodox and dated and uncreative as the room down the hall with 500 marker drawings of toasters. The irritating difference is the presumption of originality and creativity. This kind of work takes the shallowest interpretation of fine art and tries to "raise" the level of illustration. I think it really reveals the insecurities (financial, professional and creatively) of those who try to "crossover." I guess it would not bother me so much if it did not usually come with a lot of ignorance and snobbery (amazing how those two show up together a lot). And maybe it bugs me personally because I had to fend off the arm twisting of all the teachers I had in the illustration program at art center to work this way. My academic interests were nauseating to them, and I paid the price many times.

Don't for a minute think I do not appreciate the developments in 20th Century art. I think it is truly incredible. The questions that have been asked by so many artists about the nature of what is art are really profound. I don't mean for the previous paragraph to imply that I like Rockwell because it "looks like a photograph, man!", and I don't like abstract expressionism because "any monkey could do that." We all owe a great debt to modern art.

Gecko, it is just a guess, but I think you were impaled on this kind of unforgivable snobbery. I sentence them to read comic books and maybe learn something.

My first thought is always to paint from life, but since this is inconvenient at best, you have to do the next best thing. And really where bang is at, drawing from life may not be the best thing. The model moves, time is limited; there is SO much information there that it is easy to become overwhelmed. Academies used to have the beginning student drawing from plaster casts, which I think is a great way to start- it has many of the advantages of drawing from life but few of the drawbacks. Only when they had that mastered could they draw from the model. So buy a plaster head, if you can.

But if that is not a possibility, use photos. Trying to draw out of your head from the start is a sure way to blow a gasket. I know I do sometimes. These photos (I bet you can't tell where I got them) are B+W on purpose. The whole idea with starting out is to eliminate variables (motion of models, color, time, etc.) The best way would be to start with drawing, but everyone wants to jump right in with painting, so I think this approach is a good compromise.

READ all of the Sargent notes on my site before proceeding. You want the big picture here. Start from a middle gray, then establish your darks. That will leave you with a middle tone for most of the head that is in light. Carefully work up your lights from there. Work with a large brush at first (and later if you can manage it) and work zoomed out. Don't get into the detail at all. If you really want to fix yourself of this, run a mosaic filter on your photos so there is no detail. This can be really helpful to see just what is and what is not there. And don't worry about masterpieces, make them ugly almost on purpose. Let that they are correct make them beautiful. I should have spent more time on mine, but if I had they would be less finished than they are, but the shapes would have been more accurate.

I left the bottom row undone so you can do them.



goes to the window HEY FRED!!!! WE NEED SOME HELP OVA HEA!

Also, I put on my art center hat, meaning all pretense of humane treatment is abandoned. Think of it like pulling of a band-aid real fast- It's better in the long run!

Look at everyone's and see if your crit agrees with mine. Doesn't have to but it is interesting to develop your own judgment.

After you have done a few, take the original, size it over your painting and turn the layer on and off really quickly. How does it differ? A good way to check things out.

*****Also, I screwed up, goto corbis.com and type in heads,

that is where all these are from. You can get a little better rez that way. Working from these little images is a little cruel. Now he tells us.

Spooge- Not precisely drawn. Spend much more time getting the really big shapes quite accurate (not rendered or finished or fussed) and less on eyelids. Overall character of heads is not coming through.

Flinthawk- too much information, too many little value shifts where they are not doing you much good. On right, too much contrast, or light and dark areas within the shadow area. Does not read like shadow. What is in shadow should be in shadow, what is in light, in light. The shapes that result for the division of light and shadow...

Francis- Yes, similar comments to spooge. Bigger brush, see the bigger shapes. Her head is an inverted cone, sharper radius at the chin. Brow in plan view is peaked, meaning we see little of her far eye beyond the nose. You have a lot of that eye showing, making her face flatter than it should be.

Evil toilet- Yes! This is what I like to hear. There are fewer details in my sketches, but what about them is more interesting than the photos? That is what I am after, successful editing.

Surferboi- Pop eyes- Eyes not staying in socket means too much contrast, eye goes darker to stay under brow. Don't round off your shapes, keep the corners on things, or they look melted

Aquamire- my mind automatically does a lot of really bad stuff too. That is the whole reason behind trying. And as I said in the introduction, this is a lame substitute for life drawing. If you find no value in it, which I can certainly understand, don't do it. Read the Sargent notes- you are "overstating your tones" Are those really the values you see in their relative positions and strengths? Simplify does not automatically mean exaggerate, most of the time it just means eliminate.

Gitch- too blurry and soft. Work more on basic proportions, and alignment. Read Sargent notes on "keen appreciation of the vertical" I can't remember what page, so you have to read it all again 😊 The vertical thing is just a way to check your drawing. You can use a horizontal as well. Look at your head on the right. Look at the top of the ear and the eye- they are quite a bit off. Less time blending, more time thinking, looking, and drawing.

Koryh Looks good, just be much more precise, and at least indicate front and side planes of head. That huge eye is growing hungry and will soon devour us all.

Gimbal- read about vertical and horizontal alignments as drawing aids above. Look at the relative position of the two eyes. Your far eye is way high. More time on stuff like that and less smoothing it out.

Jezebel, simplify. Much activity and contrast everywhere. This is not automatically bad, but it is a crutch to make something look interesting. I like to paint in oils really thick cause it looks cool. Even when my painting doesn't 😊 Looks at your painting and then the source and back and forth rapidly. Does yours have the same feeling? Have you communicated from the original through your mind and to the third party who has never seen the original? I know that it is arbitrary to limit yourself to only this, but it is a good restraint and challenge for this exercise. It is hard, requires control and observation and thinking, and not as much expression.

Staff sarge- simplify! Read the Sargent notes on “classifying” values. Where is the lightest light and darkest dark? It is subtle, but it is there. Measure it with the eyedropper. Even blur it a lot and sample it. It is there, and it really will help you. Also, might back off on the contrast in shadow areas. Will improve graphic effect through simplification.

Frost- do it all like you did the bandanna around the girls hair. Simple, understated, no scrubiness about it. The draw is good, but it is not what is there, you have changed things a bit, read Jezebels comments. See those areas in the light halftones that are blown out? This is one reason to draw from life, you would have a much better handle on faking that in after a few years of studio time.

Jezebel 2- yes better, but the drawing is gone. Not details, but big picture stuff. Do the overlay thing and you will see the trouble. Not only look at how your shapes are different, but what forms of the head your shapes imply. Like Francis and the flat face. If you think about it this way, you will learn to “feel” your way through drawing problems (look whose talking) in the future. If you just look at the shape, it comes in one eye and out the other.

Dr bang too render-y Too concerned with smooth finish. Did you read the Sargent notes? Go!



I don't have the time to crit each of these, so please forgive my giving only general advice. I did the guy Jezebel posted to show maybe what I am trying to get across. He was a good example because of the heavy textural quality, and I knew that the wrinkles were going to attract a lot of attention. Nooo...

Try to get the "gesture" of the head, and express that through careful drawing and modeling. In a sense this becomes concerned with likeness, because it should look somewhat like the person. If it is really done well, it will look even more like the person than the photo. Someone who knew them would relate to a well-done painting more than a photo, often. A photo will pick up all kinds of things many that work against a likeness sometime. Caricaturists know this well. A good likeness often has a slight feeling of caricature, because of the exaggeration of important forms and the suppression of what is by chance there.

People often ask about values, how to do them, etc. The values are controlled completely by the form. So if you know the form, you simply show that by the values.

I missed the likeness of this guy by quite a bit. I made his head much more iconic, more "roman." His face is quite wide in the front. I did this on purpose really, because that is where my head is at right now. Romans make better pirates 😊 But notice that in all that texture and wrinkles of the forehead, I pulled the basic planes out of them. If you look for them, and know what to look for, they are there. But is it the first read when you look at the photo? No, all those wrinkles are. But what is more important? For the photo-real photo copyist, the wrinkles. Detailed pics of old people are part and parcel of that genre. But I have rarely seen one that was really well constructed. That is the whole point of this exercise, to recognize the forms in the photo, to simplify the extraneous detail, and use value to show those forms.

So you might ask, why is this better art than just doing the wrinkles? Well it is not, really. If you are a shape copyist, that is the extent of your art, and it will limit you forever. And it is just not that difficult to do. But if you learn the more basic structures, you will be freer down the road to do more and more interesting things, to put some of yourself into what you paint.

As I have said before, it does not bother me at all if someone traces one of these. I can see it a mile away, and it does not cover up lack of understanding. If a competent artist traces it and does it well, the results would be about the

same as if they did it freehand. But when the shapes are very accurate but the forms are modeled poorly, it is very apparent. Probably that person would do themselves a favor by not tracing and training the eye and hand by doing it freehand. Drew Struzan, Norman Rockwell, two artists come to mind who did trace from photos with the use of a lucigraph. But they understand what it is they are doing. Drawing is not a parlor game to see who can duplicate better. That is only the most basic component.

So in general of the pics everyone has been doing, I would say slow down. Think about what you are doing. Spend more time thinking about it, looking at the model and then put a stroke down. Try this: Have your painting open in two windows, the first is 100 percent and zoomed in so maybe the eyes are the only thing in the frame. The second window is the whole thing, zoomed out so you are seeing it from a distance. Make your source photo the same size. That way you have the control, and you can see what you are doing from the zoomed out version.

I think that I have said use a big brush has lead people to think these should be offhand quick sketches, with a lot of gestural marks and textures. They should be done slower with more deliberation, really thinking about the form. How long it takes is not really that important.

If I say accurate and careful, doesn't that make you think of detail and rendered eyebrows? Accurate and careful big shapes and values. Ah, I just figured out how to say what I mean in one sentence. Writing this is a bit like the exercise. Sorry I wrote so much, I did not have time to make it shorter. Hehe get it?

the costume is from gladiator. Did that win an oscar for costume? I would have voted for the woody allen flick.



What is your light source(s)? What temperature are they and how strong are they? You have to have this stuff in your mind when you are painting something this quick.

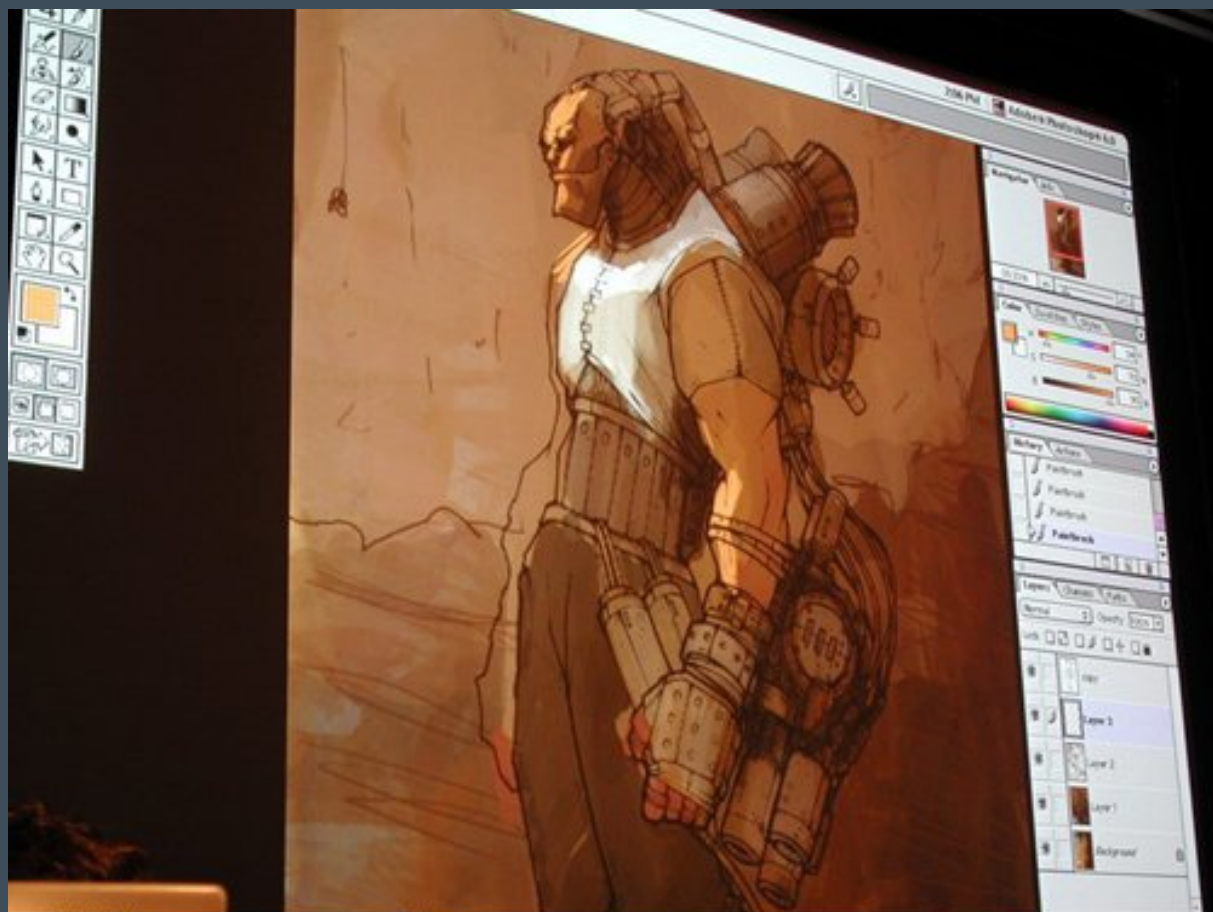
It looks like the sun is directly behind him, but there is a very strong cool source off stage right. If this is true, rethink it with this in mind.

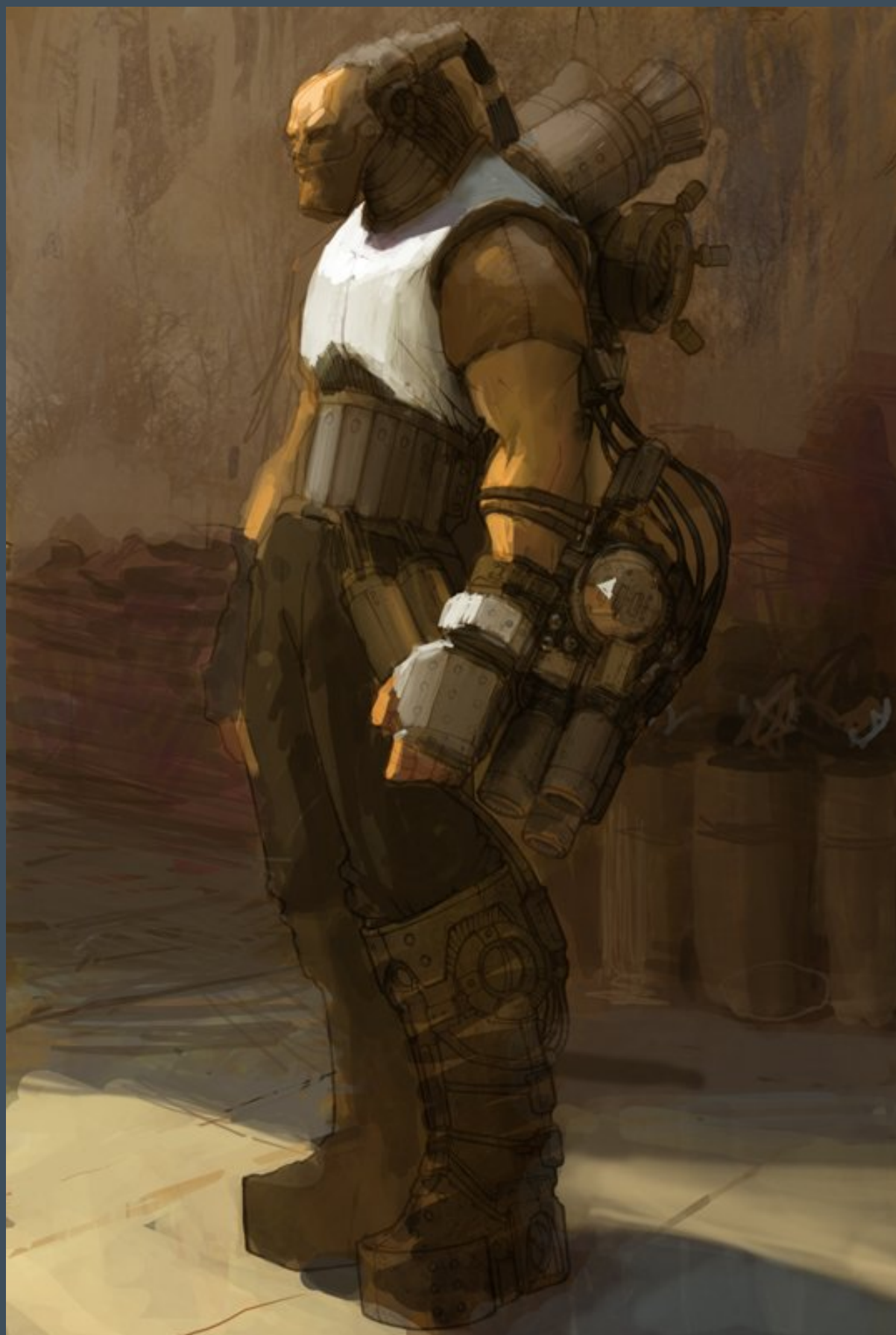
As far as the detail goes, I agree with everyone else, that it needs more. But you can get away with this amount, but what you do put down must be a lot more specific than what you have here. The silhouette could say a lot more, and be no more detailed than it is here. Right now, the lighting says the helmet is peaked in the front. The bottom of the helmet agrees and reinforces this, but the visor and top of the helmet ellipse go against it.

The overall gesture and head and body are a good start, and the spikes are also a help. Just from the careful thought of the shape of the spikes how much information you gave about the wrap of the shoulder, and also the eyelevel of the viewer.

I think that is how to get better at these quick drawings. Not more detailed, better drawn.

It is kinda backwards, but the more you try to simplify, the more complex your analysis has to be at the start. A good sketch might look simple, but it is not, it is just all the work was done somewhere else 😊





I did this demo at Art Center with the understanding that it would not become a commercial venture, and that seems to be the path that it is taking.

I initially said "OK" to the video taping without giving it much thought. It never occurred that it might have commercial value. Then the idea was to tape it so those who could not attend could see it. Fine once again. My only caveat at the time was that art center not profit by it, as I was being paid a token fee for the event. I mistakenly assumed it was coming out of the organizers pocket. This was my mistake and I should have clarified.

Before you accuse me of being a profiteer and only interested in money, please understand that this is exactly what art center is. Nowhere on their stationary does it say a non-profit institution. So without thinking clearly, I said fine, sell the videos, donate the proceeds to charity; it's not worth anything anyway.

But art center has total rights to whatever the students do, in or out of class, and would probably claim that this video, done at their school, is their property and sell it. Sell something that they were barely willing to compensate me for at all. And there would be nothing I could do to prevent it. This is not OK. I don't know if this sequence of events would have taken place, but I see in Feng's remarks that it is going to be sold in the student store, and from there onto the internet. So I see this is something that is now out of my control completely, and many other parties may profit by it. Consider someone downloading your work from your site, making cd's of it and selling it. And this person is someone who has played hardball with you in the past. It is very disheartening. That is why I want these tapes back, I don't want them floating about anywhere.

The photos that Feng took are OK by me, as long as nobody sells them. It blows me away that this crap has any commercial value, but people's behavior toward it indicates otherwise.

Also there is the matter that I have not seen these videos, I don't know their quality, etc. If I do something like this in the future, I will do it the way I want it, and I will control it.

I do not feel badly towards the person who organized this and video taped it, I said it was OK. I do not feel he intentionally set this up this way. It was my fault for not thinking through the ramifications of it. Again, it never stuck me as having any commercial value. And it is not a matter that I want all the money, I

think it is reasonable to expect that others will not be making money on it while I make nothing.

I really feel sick about this whole mess. I just want to make images and be left alone for the most part. My email is clogged with the most bizarre requests and demands, and if I don't comply, insults and threats. I don't have the slightest problem with most people who contact me, but it takes time to evaluate each contact. So the efficient thing to do is be cautious, and that makes people think I am a great big dickhead. I really, really hate the position I am in. I feel it draining away my enthusiasm for participating here, teaching in general, and even artwork as a whole.

When you mix compliments, try altering the value of the compliment to the same as the color you are greying out. Example, take a 70%red, mix a 70% percent green and then mix them together. Then you get greying without changing value. It is a lot of work, but it works well, very decorative.

Get Human Anatomy by Goldfinger. The best I have seen by far, they have it on Amazon. Monumental.

I think there is no best book, all the approaches, from personal to clinical are all worthy of study. I really like Bridgeman myself. I am really getting more and more disenchanted with Loomis.

Assignment 1 will be two matte white cubes resting on a white surface. Cubes are the same size. One point source of light. Design the arrangement of the cubes on the surface, the angle of view, and the angle of the light source and resulting shadow patterns to reinforce the feeling of form. An extreme example of a mistake would be to graphically line up the edges of the cubes as to flatten out the image and confuse the viewer as to the 3-d reality of the scene. Part of this assignment is learning conventions of showing form in the clearest way possible.

One of the skills that this assignment should develop is your ability to draw and judge basic shapes. It is actually very difficult to draw two cubes accurately. The number of possible errors rivals the number of stars in the sky.

Also the arrangement should be aesthetic, whatever that means. You know, use the conventions of western art to make a composition. Again, this is not creative time. This is to learn the basics so you can successfully ignore them later, if you want.

You should consider making basic shapes out of cardboard (mine are wood) and making a setup. You will learn a lot from this. Try photographing it as well. See the shortcomings of photography. (Beginning photo students have to photograph these setups. They try to do with camera and film what you are doing here. It is almost more difficult to do well with a camera.)

I would stay away from 3-d. You will not internalize the lesson this way. Use it to study, that is great, but not as a crutch.

When you are ready (when I say), you move to the next assignment.

I will be posting this page with the drawings, and updating it with further explanations of the next assignments. A rough plan. This WILL change.

2. Another arrangement, matte cubes on a white surface, but make one black, the other white. Can make them different sizes
3. One cube, one cylinder, one cone, one sphere. Cube is black.
4. Same as 4, sitting on a semi reflective surface. New composition however
5. New composition, reflective objects.
6. "Crash" several simple shapes together to make something resembling a child's pull toy.

eh.



Try to think about what you are doing, analyze before you paint. A lot of useless rendering and scribbling just weakens the image. If you have 40 minutes, that time does not have to be taken up in frantic scribbling. Think about it, then do it. Make a stroke, evaluate it. It is hard at first, just the opposite of what you think you should be doing, but stick with it, and you will get faster.

Play up the differences between materials. Look at the penknife and the

surface it sits on. You have 3 materials, ground, steel and plastic. The steel should have the least texture and "scribbly" contrasty stuff in it. You have rendered them all the same.

See the shadow shape of the body of the knife? What in that shape is not helping describe things? How could it be simplified, cleaned up. I am not saying a total lack of texture, but the design in the drawing must be there.

Maybe the ground could be a little more scribbly. Try to play flat areas off areas with more texture. The more variety you get into the image that better it will be. Flat areas against textured areas, big shapes and a few small shapes. Create contrast with as many different parameters as you can.

Off to do the cubes

And now, to contradict everything I just said,



Cicinimo Yes, if I remember correctly what I have posted in this thread, there is no ref used. I generally don't use it, but if i need to know something particular, I dig it out. Just how many lug nuts are there on a 52 ford that lost it's hubcap? Stuff like that.



This one, however, is obviously from a screen grab. Don't know what film/show, but she had a neat neck.

Igino, sometimes I do that, not always. The running pirate was done at the rez you see it, with no layers. Bluberry was done with a lot of layers and a lot of abuse.

That is one point of these sketches, to not use the same method over and over again. If you want to be wise and cautious, change one variable at a time. You can get lost flopping around like a fish.

But my old goache sketches looked very similar. You could tell the same person did them. So it might have more to do with that than a technique.

Two thoughts-

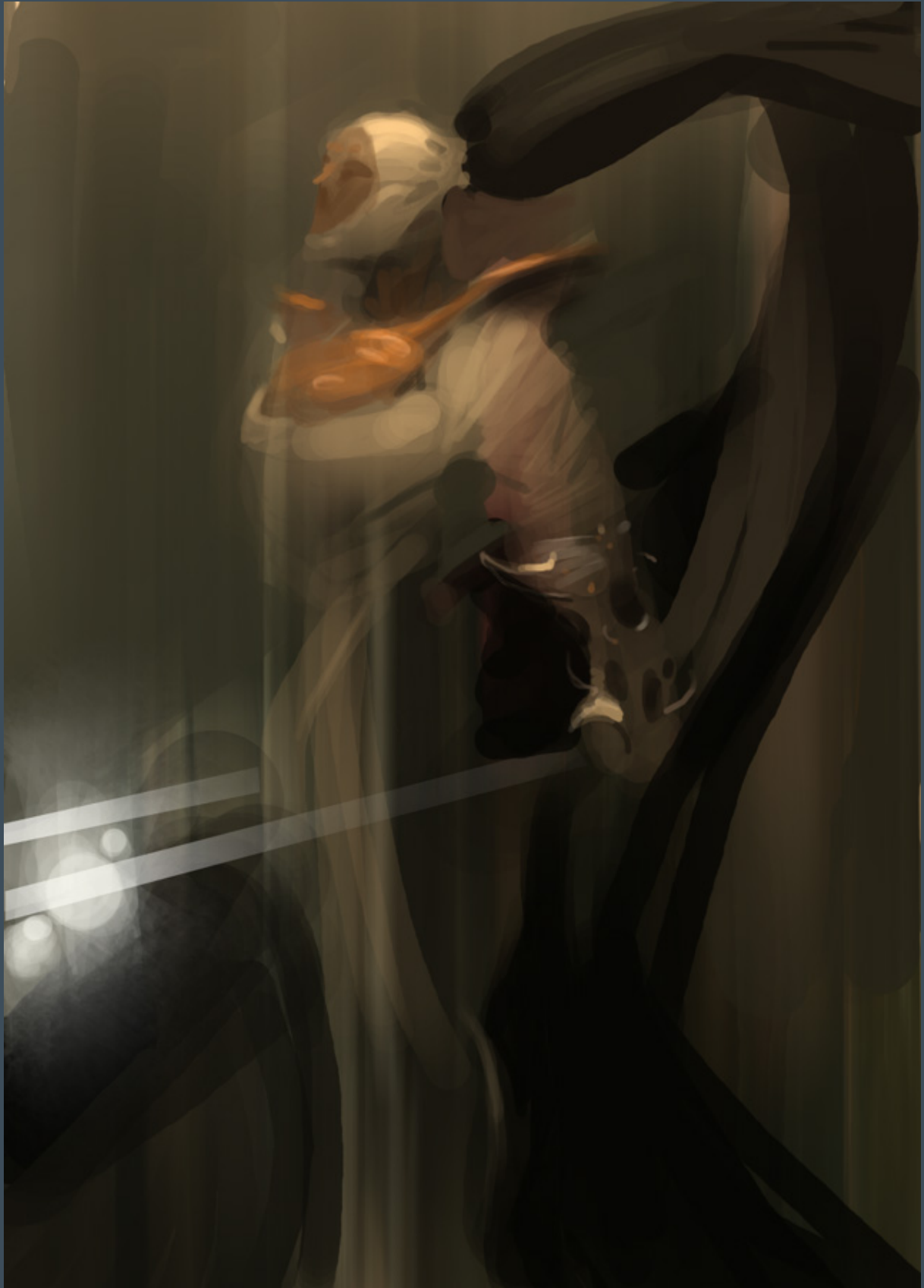
1) You will not be doing what you are planning now in 10 years. That is not an excuse not to plan, but just be aware that serendipity is the rule of life. So plan on that.

2) Related to that, keep in mind that industries rise and fall. Animation in the mid 90's was red hot, graduates making 6 figures. Now it is a ghost town, all within 5 years. Games are hot at the moment. This might not be the case in the future.

The best bet is to be the most well rounded and solid artist you can be, so that it is not difficult to do something else, if needed. I consciously try to diversify, not only for security of income, but it makes you become a better artist. There is a lot of synergy in spreading out and you will remain interested and fresh, and work harder because of it.

Neat gesture to it, sorry I moved the blade a little. And look, I even PAINTED the lens flare! I wonder if that is kosher?

Looks like Bob Peak.



One problem with drawing from photos or relying on the Brigman too much is conceiving of anatomical form in a caricatured way and missing some of subtle stuff. Most ways of looking at the figure are either rounded or squared volumes. You have to be able to think both ways really. As the model moves around you would pick this up much quicker than years of copying shapes from photos.

Muzman, I see you have a clear conception of the front plane of the face, but maybe too much. The eye sockets actually slant backwards at quite an angle, so maybe they should not be included in the front plane of the face. You can see the difference in the two perspective drawings. One problem in beginning drawings is not seeing the warp and foreshortening of the far side of the face as it curves away from the viewer.

There are some people with heads like this, but it is rare.

There is a similar problem with seeing the general wrap of the planes of the head from top to bottom. The front plane of the forehead faces up more than the chin or the cheeks. Think of it as flat planes glued to a sphere. Also, the idea from 3-d of normals is a neat way of thinking about planes.

There is a similar hierarchy in traditional art. Drawings and watercolors, for instance, are less valued than oil paintings. Not much sense there.

Fine art is much more valued than the applied or decorative arts. Not much sense there either. Let's not even talk about illustration.

Drew Struzan made the point that the Sistine Chapel was a commissioned illustration. Hehe pope as AD. He seems to think that his work, being as fine as it is (and it is) will have a life outside of its illustrative origins.

So who cares anyway? I think some comic art is pretty wonderful, as well as some matte paintings. Chuck Jones is a genius.

My wife has related that when people ask her what her husband does and she

tells them, the reaction is something like;

what does your husband do?

he's an artist

how nice! what kind?

a digital one

oh, I seee...

uh, who does he work for?

he freelances

uh, I sorry to hear that... I sure things will look up soon dear...

"...never look at forms in extent but in depth. Never consider a surface except as the end of a volume, and the more or less broad point which it directs towards you."

Rodin.

What he means is don't look at just the shapes, but what is going on in the interior of the shapes. Silhouette can carry a huge amount of info, yes, but it is not a good way to progress with seeing and drawing. later, ok.

Are you learning to draw or are you learning the forms of the skull? They are almost the same thing. Learn the form so you can draw them from any angle from your head, then you have learned them. Start with the most basic conception of the skull, a sphere with a boxier form crashed into the front of it, and place the secondary forms on that. But draw the basic forms precisely, not loosely. Keep your mind in the 3-d realm, not in shapes. In the end, your mind must go back and forth many times a second between seeing the shape and thinking about the form.

sculpting is one of the best ways to learn the form. Also, if you can dig up plaster life casts, that is better than a model, as local value and color variations do not confuse you, it does not move, get tired, etc.

I am sorry if this does not make sense right now. I have tried to write as clearly as I can, but it is hard to say with words. It will make more sense as time goes on.

Start from a middle value. Don't be afraid of your darks- In digital, they can be removed very easily. In traditional media, be afraid, very afraid.

So think in the beginning, with your nice gray BG, is the figure lighter or darker than the BG? Where is the light coming from? Big shapes and big questions.

I had a teacher once say to paint the big silhouettes like the lights have been turned off, or to update the idea, like a 3-d rendering with a fairly high ambient value.

But the main thing is to not be afraid to play in the paint; there is no way to get lost. Oblagon has been doing a lot of work like this lately.

high key, low contrast makes it feel bright. You can do it other ways too.

Low key low contrast would make it dark? Yes, I think so.

I guess what I was trying to say earlier is get as much as you can out of the shapes before applying rendering/values to the forms.

But keep in mind the shapes don't have to have hugely different values if the texture is "quiet". By quiet I mean low contrast. The more "active" the texture, the greater the value difference between shapes must be in order for the shapes to read.

I shortened her torso a little and removed most of her shorts just to be safe.

I think working the BG and then the figures can get you into trouble, not only in wasted effort, but in the picture is not designed as a whole.

maybe get some ref on mountains, the geology and the shapes they make when backlit. Your shapes would be more descriptive then.

But I got around it by making them flat, lengthening the lens to turn them more into abstract shapes that support the action. If you spent more time, you could render some real cool mountains back there. But be careful of the atmospheric perspective, keep the contrast low so it stays back there.

Hehe I would love to play max payne, but my NT box has a card that won't run direct x. Ugh.



I have overdone the simplification to make a point. Start with large blocks of flat color and be very careful with your values. Make do with as narrow a value range within the shapes as you can. I know the temptation is to pile the white highlights on those rocks, but resist. Instead, spend the time designing the shapes that will really describe the rocks well from the angle you are looking at and you will find the urge to noodle leaving your trigger finger.

All this goes especially for low contrast underwater diffuse scenes.

I like BGs as an image much more, but mine would need less work to make it into a workable matte, IMHO.

The exposure latitude of film is pretty narrow, and photography is generally exposed for the lights. The eye works this way too but can adjust very quickly to differing light levels. So when you look at photography, especially low light stuff, you will find many lost edges and areas where different forms combine their shapes to make much more complex and abstract shapes. Mostly in the shadow areas, that is. In the light, stuff separates and there is a lot of form and color.

If there is one giveaway that I see more than anything else in effects work, it is too much detail and contrast in the shadow areas. Example- t-rex lifts his leg, and you can see tons of texture in the recess. The night scene in JP1 was nice, though. Really well matched.

I agree that the color is a little frankfurter, it is a red and red on red. You could vary that either side of red, a little warmer, a little cooler. The head does have a lot of local color variation, and the clichés of what goes where (nose a little warmer, lips cooler, eye sockets cooler, etc.) is a good thing to memorize. It will really help the head come alive. It is very subtle, but heads are seen so often that you have to be extremely precise, as tiny variations of any kind (edge, shape, color) have a huge impact.

The other aspect is shape design. All your shapes, with the exception of the

obvious ones, are very soft. You have to find the variations in edges that happen for so many reasons and play them up some. Look at where the hair meets the skin. Can you see where, relatively speaking, where there are harder and softer shapes? In some areas it is almost lost. You see this on most heads you will come across. Cutting a mask with a razor will give that cutout-2d look.

But as I said, maybe that is your intention.

If it is, then you have to be EXTRA good at designing them, like a good comic inker is, so that it is graphically appealing and also describes the anatomy.

If you want, someone was playing around with Sargents lady Agnew head around here. Make a copy of that, no a forgery. Look at it as closely as humanly possible. You will get a lot out of that, I think.

And this is not to say you have to paint like that or like me! Please no. But it is such a basic and academic way of doing things it will help you with your own style a lot, promise.

This is an exercise that was part of a color theory class at Art Center. The teacher was Judy Crook. The two small studies are tiny and done a long time ago that is why they are a bit crude.

The idea, if I remember, was to take a photo of some complex outdoor architecture and do three studies-

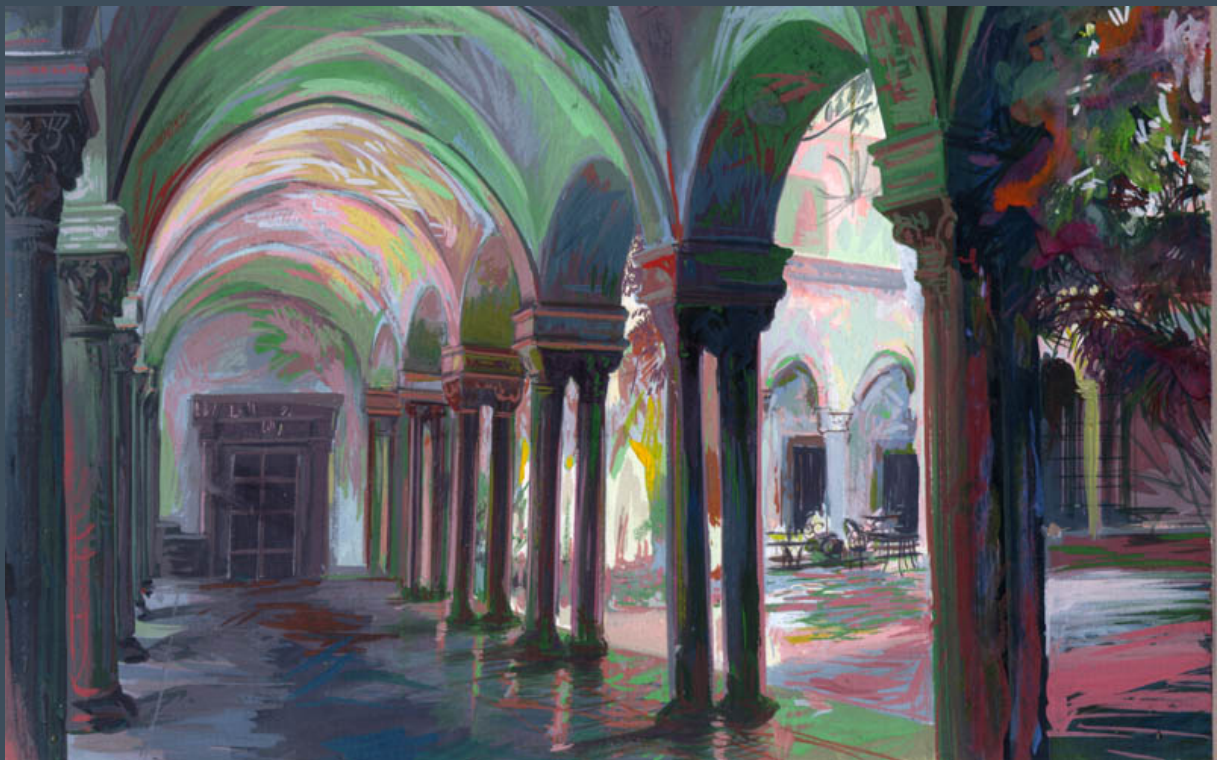
The first is to use correct values, but make the colors arbitrary. There should be no color dominance in any area. This is an exercise to make the mind separate value and color.

The second and third follow these general ideas:

After the cool night, a lot of moisture is in the air, like being under water almost. The sunlight is shifted a little cooler, greener and yellower. After the sun creates wind and heats up the land, the moisture burns away and dust is picked up and blown around. A sunset is warmer and a bit less diffuse. The arm cool contrast of light and shadow is a bit more pronounced.

So the second study is cool light, warm shadow. The colors and values are softer, and the warm/cool difference is a little more muted. But the relative difference is definitely there. And it is not something that should be brutally followed, as you can see there are breaks in the formula. If it were followed too closely, it would look cartoonish.

The third is warm light, cool shadow, more like afternoon into evening. Again, it is not a formula that will guide every last color choice, as what determines color is a million different little mechanisms. But it is a general starting point.





It was drawing cars that I first got a handle on which end of the pencil was the business end. The sweat, the tears...

Draw them from other perspectives first. You will learn a huge amount. Draw through the forms (like draw all four wheels) and use section lines.

It is tougher than you think to draw the same form from several angles. For instance, where you have made the roofline around the b-pillars the same as the silhouette, that becomes a flat plane on top. Or, there is a very soft roll to the section, but you have to show that.

The teachers were always getting on guys for "designing in clay." It has probably changed to designing in 3-d now, but anyway. The idea is that you need to have a much better understanding of the form in order to draw it than model it, or so the theory goes. It requires a more complete understanding of the form. Then you use the drawing to model it.

The clay models were used to study masses and silhouettes, but also reflection patterns. Most cars have a "break" in the form where the sides go from vertical to starting to roll more horizontal. This compresses the bright reflection of the sky and ground down to a thinner line, and really cleans up the appearance of the car. Reflection control was the buzzword.

There are designers who won't ever do an elevation drawing, because it is so easy to be misleading. Others, like Giaguaro, just do elevations and let the modelers actually design the thing.

When I was at Ford they were trying to make a virtual studio, going from wet dream to prototype without any messy drawings or models. I am sure that is a reality now.

Also consider that a windshield at an angle greater than about 60 degrees is impractical. The angle that the occupants look through gets shallow and visibility is impaired. The material must be perfect. Also, visibility becomes very sensitive to any dust, and if driving toward the sun, very dangerous. At one time, another reason was glass is heavy, expensive, not strong, and difficult to make into compound shapes. I am sure some new unobtainium is coming along to make these problems disappear, though.

Just stuff to think about, not serious suggestions.

You are missing some of the bigger forms, partly due to the flat lighting of the ref pics, so that makes it quite an advanced challenge to see what is important and what can be left out. I see some designing and some editing, but I question the kind of decisions you have made in places. It is working right now because of the accuracy of the bigger shapes, but I think you need to be more aware of trying to express the forms. You know your big naked dude in the water? Try to think that way when painting these types of images. You are bowled over by the photo, it is dictating too much. You try to reassert yourself by changing the local color of an object or using more than one photo, but I think you can do more.

The head you have painted does not have any roll to it. You got the shapes right, but the forms are not there, IMHO. See where the jaw comes toward the viewer from the neck? See where the side plane of the neck transitions into the front? The info is there in the photo, but it is really subtle. In yours these subtle indications are gone, the neck is kind of blobby. And I am not saying this level of "detail" is required all over, it is just knowing which details to bring out. Instead of thinking of the hair as strands, think of the forms and bring that out. Also, be aware of the edges, which can be really useful in defining materials. I could not play with edges much in this little sketch because the size here is the size I painted it at.

I know you are going for a gestural quality in the mark-making, but that is fine, it still is the question of what to indicate with those marks.

I feel a little strange saying all this to someone who has been working a lot longer than I have, so I am sorry if I come off as a snot nosed kid.

This is the hard stuff in painting, the tracing is so inconsequential. I traced this one, just to get moving.

I know that this sketch may be not at all what you are going for but hopefully you find it somewhat useful/interesting.

Don't pay any attention to the face, I really only did anything to the jaw and hair a bit.

make your halftones (areas that are in light but not highlight) a little darker, and keep the highlights bright, flat and clean. A fully reflective object does not respond to diffuse light and shadow. This Frog, like 99 percent of all objects has some matte qualities, some reflective qualities.

The cast shadow of the hood on the cheek is the Main Event, and is a cast shadow, so go ahead and make it nice and crisp. If you make this an area of maximum contrast and sharpness, you have something to judge the rest by. The jaw line in a large radius form, so make that nice and soft. If you look at the lit area of the face on yours, the edges all around are of a similar character and width and softness.

I could pull in more differentiation in the shadow areas, but always keeping the edges and contrast and detail subordinate to the edges and detail in the lit areas. The brighter the light, the more detail, color, contrast etc are present. I have kinda exaggerated this in this sketch. In the mouth, there is much more information in the lit side, nothing in the shadow.

In life drawing one idea from the old masters is there is no such thing as a concave form. You concern yourself with only positive or "displacing" forms. The appearance of hollowness comes from where two positive forms come together. Think of the nostril like that. It is not a hole drilled into the nose, but the nostril is the absence of a form where several other complex forms come together. I screwed up the nose too. It's a toughie.

The far nostril is behind the central part of the nose, it is hard to see in the ref, but it is there. Think about the nose like in graffiti 1, results in the shapes of the nostril, like in 2.

I have two monitors side by side and a 6*9 (8.5!!) wacom. Since the wacom covers both screens, this thread brought home the fact that I am really painting on a 4.25 inch wide tablet! Also, the aspect ratio is all screwy. An inch horizontally on the tablet is much longer on screen than an inch vertically. I have not noticed this and when I work on another machine, there is no transitional period. It should be like wearing someone else's glasses, you would think.

About art center..

congratulations! You have no idea what is in store 😊

There are a lot of people who go there, graduate, and do not continue with a career related to art. I had one teacher who summed it up " your success is in direct proportion to your ability to draw." The people who have not done as well I think did not get all they could out of the foundation drawing classes, and made some rationalization as to why drawing was not important to their art. Most are doing something else now, and that may be best for them actually.

Drawing was not emphasized at AC right when I was there. The conceptual content was more important. This may have changed. There was a nod to foundation skills, and then off to be fine artists for print. As an example, there was one (ONE) head drawing class.

So the foundation (first two years) and figure drawing and painting was what I considered really important for me. Also, I had two years of ID, which I could and would not give up for anything. The second two years you do have some electives, so retake the foundation classes (you will know by then what the hell those buggers were talking about) and some ID classes, including the basic shapes class.

But also do not become so focused on the "skillz" that you ignore everything else that the school has to offer. It will really broaden you as an artist. The twentieth century did in fact happen and it is a great thing. This, and a few other things about emphasis, are what I see as the drawbacks of the Fred Fixler type ateliers. Don't be someone who has the opposite problem to the one named above, i.e. a portfolio with a bunch of nice heads and naked people and little else. I struggle with this problem. Try to learn to do something with the skills you acquire. Since you are going into design work, this will be forced on you somewhat. So don't wiggle too hard when they make you take classes in which you do not see immediate benefit.

I hope I don't sound dogmatic, but from what your goals are, I think this plan will do you well.

To me the talent, imagination, vision etc that was required to conceive and make real programs like photoshop and maya far exceed that of anything that these programs have produced. Learning how computers work makes you aware of the beauty of the minds that created these things. That was my reaction, anyway.

I suppose there is such a thing as talent, but it tends to be really overated, IMHO.

Maybe nerds are just those whose interests fall clearly outside the social? Their focus could artistic or technical, and there is a lota overlap between those.

It's good you are not tracing the image, but try to use construction lines to get the forms correct, esp in the head. Don't just copy the 2-d light and dark shapes you see, try to understand what in the form or lighting or material is causing the 2d shape. I know that sounds really hard at this point, but you will get used to it as you go on.

Draw from life, not photos, if you are at all serious. Photos, esp like this, with dark reflective skin and harsh front light will just confuse you at this point.

If you are too tired, busy lazy etc to get to life class (hopefully with a good instructor) copy master drawings and then draw your hands, set up with a single light source in a dark ambient room.

Never painted something like this. I think I will go paint a pirate now.



Jucas, I graduated about 10 years ago, so I am not sure how much of my knowledge about AC is relevant today, but for what it is worth.

I do stick by what I wrote in the other thread, that did outline my general thoughts on things.

The one ID class that I think is SO important is the basic shapes and lighting class. They overhauled the class names to make it seem more structured. The foundation classes are all called viscom 1,2,3 etc. Not as descriptive, not sure why they changed the names. Not sure why they did a lot of things 😊 The shapes class is called viscom 1, I think. Find out who is the best teacher, if you have a choice, and take it.

Take the perspective class as well. I had a fellow named Brewer, he probably retired since I left, but he was very technical and this is better than "perspective for illustrators" or the equivalent of geology 101 or "rocks for jocks." Try to get the more technical teachers, you want information, not hand holding. Figure it out later, but get the info.

As far as entrance portfolio requirements, I am sure that you are screened more closely on credit score than drawing ability, so don't worry about using the classes to buff up on the portfolio. Work on drawing day and night, you will do fine. I don't think the entrance committee will be impressed by parroting back what you learned in the night classes, but they will be looking at overall drawing and design ability.

Take a drawing class from Mark Strickland if he is still there, it's called drawing for illustration, a foundation class in the ill dept. It is about seeing carefully and noticing the design in the simplest of natures forms. I did not understand what the hell he was talking about until years later. This is common, so don't judge what you are learning too harshly, just accept that it may make sense later. Be the sponge, grasshopper...

I have written before that the overall exposure to many different types of art created a kind of compost in my mind that resulted in a richer soil that has helped me through the years. If I had gone to a more specific atelier type school, I probably would not be doing art now, as it is too narrow for me. I would have gotten bored. Even though you might not see the relevance of

Dekooning to rendering a bitchin looking super shiny car, listen and absorb anyway. The trade school mentality will bite you in the ass later on.

On the other side of things, don't play the art dilettante and sit about the cafeteria posing as you ponder the deep questions of art and look down your nose at those who are working on drawing and painting. Draw and paint, but don't judge the wider lessons. Just accept them, and keep on drawing.

Most programs are divided into 2 parts, not officially, but practically. The first 2 years are skill building, the second are studio, or practicing, basically. There are electives, and I retook the foundation courses in figure work. It is good to go back to that later, and continue it. I stopped all figurative work until I started doing the little sketches I used to post here, because I was too busy struggling to get established. Now I am working from the figure three days a week. I would recommend that you never stop the way I did. Keep at it.

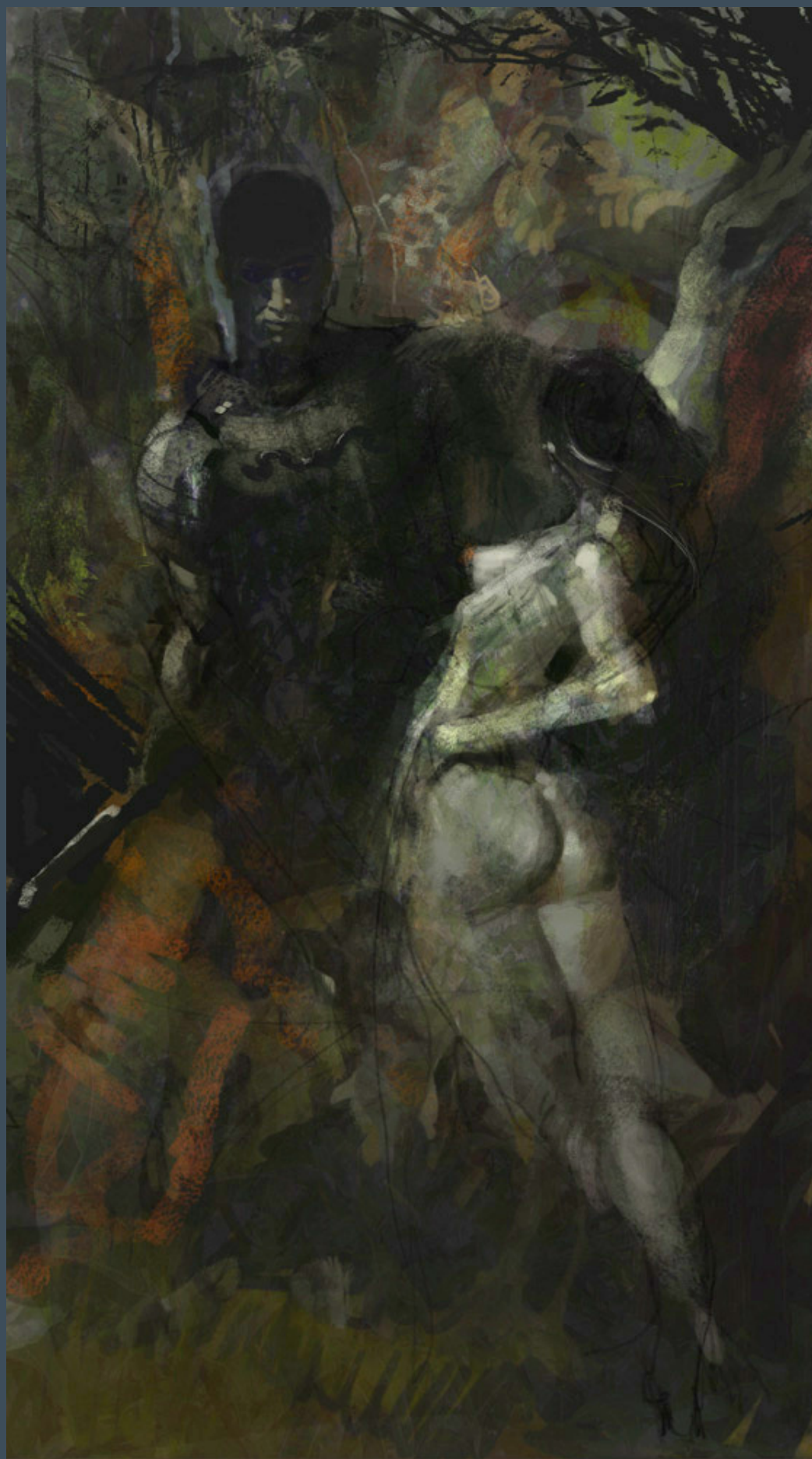
Since you are in LA, look up Glenn Villipou and sit at his feet as long as you can.

I lived in Pasadena, about 10 minutes from AC. The studio I rented used to be Alson Clark's, and my landlady used to model for him. There were a bunch of nice paintings in the closet of her painted by Clark. They are probably worth a lot. Try to live as close to AC as you can, it is wasteful commuting. Some who lived far really suffered and their work suffered as well. Many people in the area like to rent to AC students, but make it clear that you are not a party animal fine artist. There are stereotypes of the different majors.

I think we have very similar tastes in what is fun to illustrate.

I hear what you are saying about composition. I have the same trouble too. It helps to not think about the subject for as long as you can, just think about the shapes and the abstract quality of things. Think shapes and gesture and volume, not surfaces and forms and objects. That comes later, all in good time, but the tendency is to be too specific too early, at least with me. I am not sure if mine is any better, but it is different. Joachim, I see you are enjoying PS7 as much as I am 😊

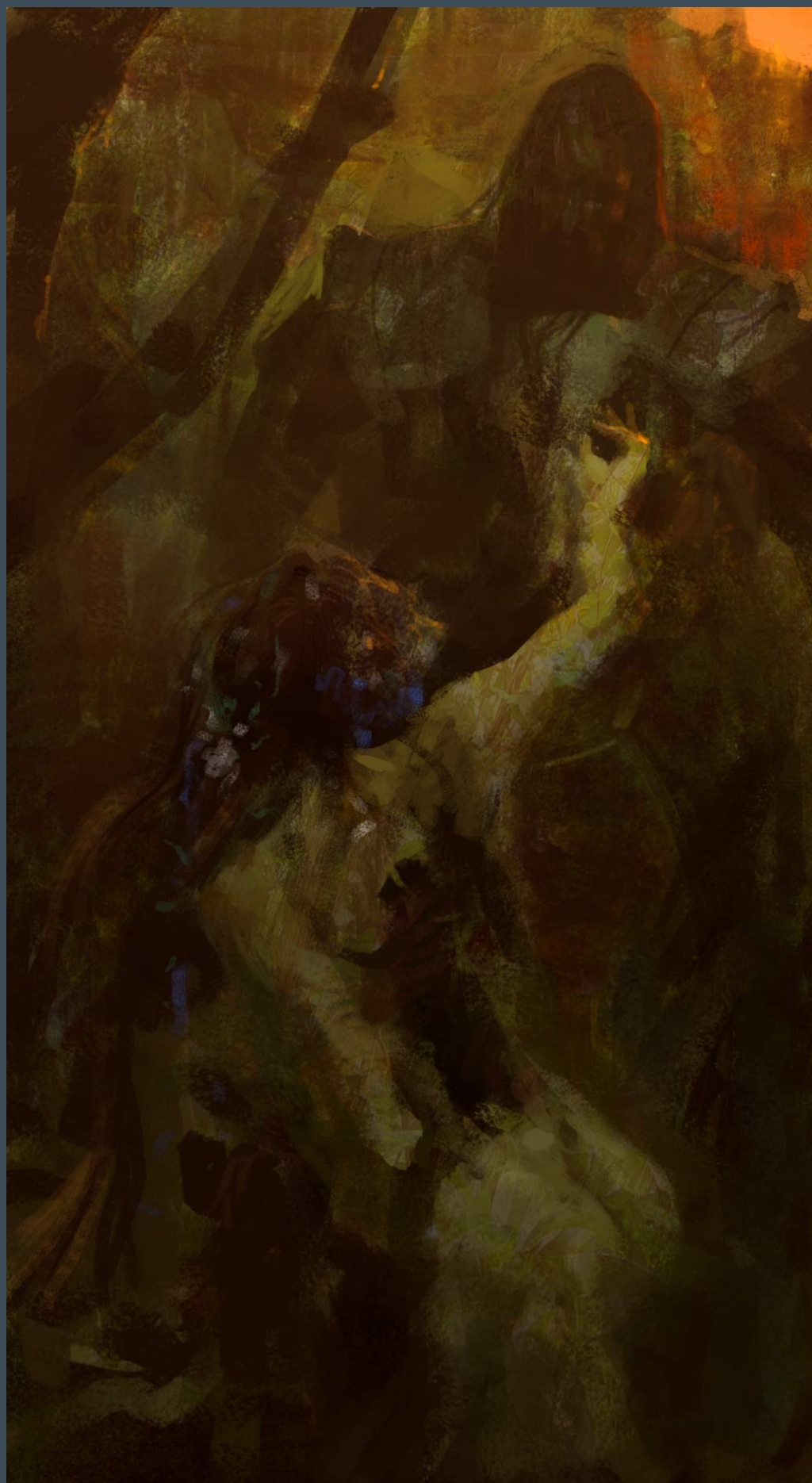
wow, that looks dark on this monitor. Sorry



Oh boy, art direction 😊 The design appeared in my cornflakes this morning. It is still the vertical serpentine diagonal-thing, but I think it is stronger than the other one I did.

Steven, I think your series makes a lot more sense since they are production images. Maybe you are thinking ahead to what can be accomplished in 3-d and what cannot?

I know this image is very large, but the file is 119K, within reason, and isn't it better seeing images at this size as opposed to the postage stamps we usually see? If you want it big, you have to keep it a half a meg, or compress it a lot. I would rather have the extra pixels, same file size, just more compression. Any thoughts, anyone? You like this size or the 6-700 pixel range?



I don't know if this helps any, but here's my take on it.

Worry more about drawing, less about value. This goes double for myself. There are instances where the two dovetail. Example, look at the thickness of the spears. The viewers brain assumes that they are all of the same thickness, so in perspective (part of drawing) they get thinner. It's a subtle thing, but a really important clue of depth in one of the few areas of the image that has any kind of sharp edge or contrast. hehe I made the same mistake in a couple of places.

And of course you need to draw from life more, if you are not already.



Nonono... Value is more important than color, but drawing is more important than value. They do overlap, but getting things structurally where they belong is the top priority. So it is drawing, value, color. In drawing, think gesture (action), volume, detail- in that order!

As far as getting oils and doing the plain air thing, you don't need to do that. The idea of drawing from life is that you are presented with objects in 3-d, with way more information than you can possibly record. It is also constantly changing. With working from photos, you copy shapes. Your brain is working at 1/10th power. Working from photos is fine after you have a lot of life drawing under your belt, but it is best draw from life first. In working from life, you have to digest what you see and make a lot of decisions. It is the difference in fresh veggies and bland pureed crap from a can. You have to work your artistic brain a lot harder in working from life. You will take this greater experience back with you into the studio.

Photos are not real, they are very selective. The problem is that the tool is doing the selecting and not you. As you work from life, take photos of your subject. You will see the differences. If you have lived your artistic life through the lens, you will never know the differences.

So draw from life, draw everything, and look and think hard. You do not have to do the stilted traditional barn paintings on location as you might see do from time to time. That's a stylistic choice.

Try to find a good teacher for figure drawing. They are around but hard to find. The best way is the traditional way, draw from castings for a while and get your skills up and then go to the live model.

As far as materials, full value charcoal is fine to start. You can then move to value painting, then to a limited palette. A teacher can help you with that.

Look up Glen Villipuu on the web- he's really great and teaches a way of drawing that is very widely applicable.

OMG they're onto me...

gotta ask why, though...

Gouache will dry towards a middle value, the darks are darker when wet and the lights are lighter. The farther from the middle you go the more pronounced it is.

Also gouache dries quickly, a plus in commercial work, and it is very flat, so it reproduces very well.

You can blend gouache wet into wet, and planning where you want your softest edges and doing them this way is the best way to go. That is another reason why it is good training- you have to think and plan.

you can paint over gouache without lower layers coming through (as long as the color is not "fugitive" in which case it will always come through). The trick is to mix up plenty of paint, use a good sable brush nicely loaded, lay down the stroke, and leave it alone. Blending will make a muddy mess. So it does enforce good habits early on. If you want to soften and edge just a little, you can after everything is dry, and it helps to paint thickly so there is enough pigment to pull around. Syd Mead paints very thickly. His early work used the wet into wet preplanned blending technique, as do his sketches, but in his finished work and more recent stuff he uses an airbrush quite a bit. I have to say I like the wet into wet better. He would do the drugged out 60 backgrounds with some kind of solvent-water resist, then paint over it with gouache.

But in the later part of my painted illustration career I used acrylic and cel-vinyl, as I believe Greg Pro does. It is similar to gouache, but does not come back up when painted over. So it allows more abuse and changes. You can block in a painting pretty thinly to start, and get thicker as you go.

Alright ChickenSoup, how you know all this stuff? What you have said is all very accurate in my book. What is your background?

Hi Phillip,

I remember when I really liked doing stuff like this, I think I am sick of it because I have done it too much. But you can really learn a lot from matte painting that can be applicable to other areas of art.

First thing, the drawing must be accurate. Looking at a matte that is nice and loose can give the wrong impression, there is a lot of pick and shovel work that goes in before you start painting. Check that ellipse in the lower left. Lot of things that you don't think of right off the bat are like the scale of floors in perspective. Floors are like figures, they are things of definite scale that must be correct. Look at the scale of the foreground building and project that back to the other buildings. This is where resolution comes in handy. Pay really close attention to your horizon line, know where it is at all times.

As far as values goes, be simple at first. What would a big cube look like if it were sitting out there? Extrapolate from that to other materials and local colors.

Generally, what makes something look like an illustration is too much contrast, esp in shadow areas. This works in illustration, as naturalism can take a back seat to graphic interest. But things of this scale can be very subtle. Know what is in the light and what is in shadow, and don't mix them up. Good general rule as well.

Within these constraints, and follow them really strictly, then you can be as loose as you want.

To much contrast. Look more carefully at the lips, the nose, eyesocket.

Think of the head as a cylinder, and look how the tones fall away towards the sides of the head. Other than very dark local values(eyes, etc) the lit portion of

the face has very few darks.

The halftones get too dark and things look a little shiny.

Read also what he said about simplification. I think many times people identify a "painterly" style a lot of loose strokes. Simplification is usually overlooked, but really is more important. Look at the white cloth- there is not a lot of "painting" going on in sargents. What forms he has chosen to paint are done with very close values.

To go a little further, I have always said that there is no such thing as an objective standard in art. If you define your standards of value narrowly enough, OK, but that gets away from why art exists in the first place.

So to answer the question of what is going to sell a game better, there is no easy way you can tell. Marketing gurus who do well designed, large studies might have my attention more than a goateed art director. At least there is attempt to answer the question rationally.

So ideally, you can find out what will sell a game, ask 10,000 people in a mall somewhere. But are you sure you would like the answer? I think a lot of people confuse what they like with what is "good." Look at the replies to the helicopter image. Some like the fireball better! They are not wrong.

George Lucas said once that if you know what a 12 year old girl wants, you will rule the world. So does art direction and marketing target thus make for bad art? Of course it does! We all know that barbarians with swords and sexbots with guns are much more aesthetic than Hello Kitty...

So you see what I mean. Art is an artificial construct and what is good is exactly what you say is good, suspiciously like reality.

But when I am art directed and I don't like the direction, it just tells me that 1) the AD is incompetent, or, 2) they know exactly what they are doing and it is I

who chafes at the least common denominator (big boobs and explosions). But what perked my eye about the composite of the helicopter thing was, after trying my best to adopt, if only for a moment, the assumptions of a marketing chimp, the helicopter looks like it is exploding! So I guess I would assume in this case that #1 is closer to the truth.

If you look through Frazetta's books you can see what was commissioned and what he was "into." It is difficult to have a bunch of work that feels right and a client comes a long and says "Mr. Frazetta, we really love that bloody barbarian, but could he be holding the shampoo bottle a litter higher and could he be smiling more? And the pile of bodies just has to go, and one more thing, the girls in the steno pool say blue is a much better color than bilious green..." Mr. Frazetta does his best and then wonders why it looks... bad. But the client more often than not loves it!

here's a tip- When you draw from life (or just doodling, really) don't just draw the figure in isolation, draw a box around it and make a composition instead of a floating collection of heads and torsos. That way when you get to the required several hundred thousand (ahem*()) figures, you will have done the same with compositions. That skill responds to practice just like any other.

Another way is to draw the figure and things around it and experiment when to box it in, or box it in one side at a time. experiment.

What is all this talk of famous? How and when did that happen? If I am known at all, it is in the microscopic field of digital illustration. Being a good digital illustrator is like being a "really good" over-the-hill amputee porn star- outside this biz, who cares? Even in mainstream illustration the digital side of things is looked on with great suspicion. Doesn't concern me much, though.

Advertising is not a conduit for personal expression. I am hired to read the clients mind (I am getting better at it) and make something that they would have done themselves if they were not busy doing more important things. That is it. It is a good point to why do a lot of work to improve my skills when nobody cares or can see the difference in the illustration world. That is not really true though, the more skilled I become, the more flexible I am, and I can solve the clients problems in a growing number of ways. It might be easier if my style was a little narrower, as the client would know what to expect. Might be a lot easier the more I think about it. The background can be any color as long as it's black, and I always use purple shadows and pink flesh.

But your advice to be more selective about clients is well taken, thanks! I agree.

I have had a relationship with Bungie software for quite a while. In that very narrow universe I am, indeed, famous. Marathon heads know what a CM illustration is. As such, Bungie has never art directed me at all. They just let me go and say "here comes another one!" It is a little like branding. But interestingly enough, I just did a cover of Halo 2 for Electronic gaming monthly, though Bungie. As the illustration progressed, the people at EGM got really nervous and started asking Bungie for "alternative solutions." To them I am a wrist, my "name" has no value in their universe.

I agree completely with what Joachim said. If I want to brand myself a little, I need to do work in areas where the artist's identity is part of the equation, such as comics or something. I wonder too if artist's like mead or Frazetta ever wanted to do other work under an alias.

I have often thought of what my work would have been if the pressures of earning a living had not come into the mix. I originally loved the Hudson river school, klimt, mucha, sargent. Illustration did not interest me. But it is impossible to look back and relive the pinball machine of life and say this or there is where I would have ended up.

But the other, more interesting question is why not do what you like now? Like

bending a young tree, I still have the effects of years of illustration on my brain. You can't straighten the tree out to it's "original" form. The bend has become an inseparable aspect of the trees nature.

Usually the opposite problem happens. Fine artists have trouble doing illustration, but the opposite direction is hard, too.

The collaborative nature of illustration appeals to me. You are given a problem that you have to solve that you would have never dreamt up on your own. It forces you to grow. Fine artists say they choose their own tasks, but I think they end up stagnating of their own limitations. Ever heard that family makes you grow more as a person because you can't choose them, so you have to get along with them? Same idea.

Im a comin, snake...

I hope I understood what you were saying, but here goes...

I agree with you, as I said, in the bigger picture, even just the "art" bigger picture, we are fleas on a dog. But as you have worked at studios that have bent you over a chair, you know that you can work 8 hours a day making someone else rich or work 8 hours and some portion goes into your "bank" (I don't mean strictly money). Freelance work is a step in this direction. I have been very careful in my life to not make commitments of any kind that would limit my options. I know of some guys who get that first big check out of school and put it down on a Porsche. Then they have to get a job to make the payments, then a cute girl comes along and you have a mortgage and other debts that need REGULAR payments. So it is of to the studio employer and long hours and a controlled future. It is hard getting out of that, and some succeed in doing it. Look at the boutique spin-offs that ILM generates.

So the discussion, to me, is what do you do to enhance the freelance situation? Copyright, work for hire, usage, are all up for negotiation, and you have to be an advocate for yourself because those whom you are negotiating with are aggressively looking out for their own interests. I don't think it is an act of ego to do this. At one time I did, but not anymore. Negotiate because you can. But

as I am a really awful negotiator, I have someone do this for me. A Disney lawyer would have me for breakfast. And they do try the "uppity artist" thing from time to time. Don't buckle, call their bluff, you will win most of the time. The clients perception of the level of your work will be enhanced by you not caving. I have had clients that refuse to work with me because I have representation. You want price and terms to scare away about 20% of clients. Then you know you are in roughly the correct position. Of course, that presupposes that there is enough work coming in, but that gets us back to marketing, and later, branding.

But the idea of doing a Thomas Kincaid makes me want to puke, I would rather man a quickie mart than that. But that is a fault of mine. And maybe underneath that is the pride that you correctly scorn. So get over myself, sell it like soap 😊 You too!

I hope this does not sounds condescending or anything, I realize that you are a professional with much experience, so forgive me if you already know all this stuff.

Aliasmoze- I never would think of myself or my potential in the same breath as those guys. I am not there, nor will I be. And besides, the images that I like have a fairly narrow appeal. I guess Frazetta does as well, but that makes him even more amazing that he invented a genre that did not really exist and made it widely popular. But of course Rockwell is about 1000 times more well known than Frazetta, but the subject matter and style was specifically designed to have very wide appeal.

oops. forgot that halo thing. This was done under some tight pressure, basically a weekend. The lens was Bungie's choice, I kinda like it. The client, EGM, thought the figure blended in too much with the BG and were close to not using it. I would have preferred to loose the figure even more.



BUNGIE

I went to accd in product design and illustration. I am a little out of date as to what is going on there, but here are a few questions to ask about art schools-

Who are the foundation instructors? Can they draw and can they teach? Do you like the work? Is it really solid and structural or is it all shapes and lucy jockey stuff? Do you like the work being done? How flexible is the program? Can you double up on aspects of the program that you find of interest to you? (this is a double edge sword, as you might change your mind about what you want to do and then being forced into a wider range of classes is then a good thing)

Talk to RECENT grads as much as you can. Ask for the contacts from the school.

scholarships? AC is like 10 grand a trimester now?

I would think twice about the Fred Fixler type schools- you can take them in addition, that is great, but you need a much wider base than they can provide. I see a higher percentage of working pros coming out of ACCD modeled programs than the ateliers.

Think about taking some ID courses.

If you have electives in the later years, retake all the foundation drawing courses.

I really like your forest, too, oDD. better than this

painter is too slow



edit, starglider, here is the ref photo. I really was inspired about oDDs forest. The lighting is diffuse above and coming through foliage. Trees are cylinders with big balls on top (quiet flat:)) and the shadows are very subtle.

The tree trunks are vertical surfaces, and of a dark local color. (There is a variety of Eucalyptus that looks burnt) They are also directly under the ball of leaves. This makes them very dark compared to the ground plane. I tried to exaggerated that.

I also liked the warm diffuse of odds but went somewhere else in the end. The red and the green are tied together by being of the same value and intensity, but hue is exact opposites. Odds had a richness due to this. It also has a cool light/warm shadow thing going on.

If you can only use one tool (line) you have to be even more thoughtful and precise with things. It is easier to rub a little tone where the silhouette doesn't carry the day.

I would say you need to slow down and be more precise. And only draw what you can do well in the time allotted. Think, solve a problem, learn something by really looking. It is arbitrary to say that you have to get the whole figure in in a certain amount of time. Maybe also use a rapidograph, so you don't have lineweight to fall back on as well as using no shading. That might force you to look for how much information is carried in just the silhouette. Going too fast makes the lines too general. I had a teacher call them "motor lines" where you are on automatic pilot, just absent minded drawing down an arm or something.

Look specifically for areas of overlapping form, and play that up.

But...

If you are an animation student, you should be drawing action and gesture, pretty much the opposite of the exercise you are doing here. Look at Glenn Vilppu's page- really solid stuff for animators and everyone. Stay away from techniques or tonal rendering for a while, learn action and structure and anatomy.

Just my opinion, I am a beginner with the figure myself.
I say Bridgeman yes, Loomis no.

The simplified conception of Bridgeman will help you out more and be more

applicable to many different stylizations of the figure, esp out of your head. Loomis is too specific to a style of illustration.

The simplified form in action is what you are after. Illustration is a little different, it is more design of shapes and edges and naturalistic.

When designing something, think about the function first, research what actually exists that is similar in function, and start from there. Design it in your head, build the whole scenario just in your brain, and then start drawing logical conclusions about what something should look like. Only then, and only then, look at other games, designers, movies. IMHO, there is too much incest, and I am guilty of it myself, deadlines being what they are, and the screaming for PRODUCT. And also, what is really sad is when the client demands what was in last years hit game, just a little different.

Do me a favor, and I will follow it to, banish yellow warning stripes from the earth:)

Painting wise, it is in between the line and painting world- go one way or the other.

If line is the way to go, make your values secondary to it, so the result is a higher key image overall.

If painting, keep what is in light and shadow clear. This doesn't mean a high contrast image, just make sure that the lightest area of shadow is clearly different from the darkest area of what is in light. The problem is "halftones too dark." This applies to only areas of similar local value, though. The lit side of a black cube is darker than the shaded side of a white cube.

Uh I could go on, but... one more thing. If it is outdoors, there is the point source of the sun, and the diffuse fill of the sky. They are your friends and use them.

This is all really just the clichés of industrial rendering, so add a little art in there if you can, different lighting sit. etc.

yes, variety of materials is good. This object is very complex and is probably made out of hundreds of materials. And if the exterior is all stucco or whatever, you are seeing each surface under different lighting conditions and different angles and each is subject to different wear and weathering. Use all this to escape the dreaded gray primer monster.

The AC admissions say are looking for creativity first, sketch technique second. Or so it would seem.

If it were up to me, I would suggest that you not look at movies or other concept art or design stuff. It all looks the same, so to be really creative, that is what you should do. Ideally. But the chances of something sucking goes up in proportion to being different.

ACCD has the bad rap, and it is justified to some extent, of being a "flash over substance school." Do a drawing of a car and put some bullets with arrows pointing out the revolutionary aspects of your design like "4 wheels", or "doors open" Nobody reads those things, and it looks cool. That is AC. I have seen bad misspellings on car drawings in the gallery. *hidraulik breaks, dude!!..*

I was product for 2 years there, and I thank them for teaching me to draw better. But I made the mistake of actually thinking about what I was designing and doing what was really interesting, solving problems in new and more efficient ways. It was not welcome. The flashy sketches, that have looked the same from 1970, is what got the scholarship money time and time again. I got C's or worse. But then I sucked (see above)

Pretty ironic now that I am an illustrator.

Creativity is ugly, expensive and painful and time consuming. I can understand why it is frowned upon in Industry. It is the least favorite method of

distinguishing a product in the marketplace.

But how revolutionary does every hair dryer need to be? Maybe I expect too much.

So back to your problem. Practically, they look much more carefully at your credit score than your portfolio, so no worries(?) I would find out who is on the admissions committee and research their tastes. Are they flashy types? Or big forearms engineer types? Change your portfolio accordingly.

Many here can help you with these ideas, no need to address it to me only. There are a lot of roads to Rome, and a lot of people here who could help you, not just me.

"I paint small - Usually 3X5 paintings. I read on your site the advantage of painting many times small over fewer large."

Yes, that is a good idea, to go through the process as many times as you can, but don't neglect doing more finished work. Sketches and finished stuff support each other, you can't neglect one for the other. Sometimes you really need to control something exactly, and what you learn there can be abbreviated in sketches.

"I don't use layers - You say these are limiting, and I believe you."

?? did I say that? Hmm, I use them as extended undos mostly. I don't think there is any harm in using them?

"I use almost no reference - (except for things that have to look realistic (weapons/vehicles)) Never use another artists work for reference. I'm not sure what your opinion on reference is. I'm afraid of it. Its too easy for me to become completely dependant on, It takes control and everything goes static. I first work from my head, and then go back and correct myself with reference. Is

this a good idea? Should I be using reference more while I'm learning? "

When you are first starting out it is difficult to do much without direct reference. As you get more experience, you would me amazed at how you can use things you see and notice. But copying photos can be useful in the beginning to learn control of media and to learn to look hard at things. Don't skimp on working from life, or you will not be able to see the box that photography can put you in. I think most artists start with an eye for naturalism and progress to more stylistic interpretations, which is natural. Working from photos too much make you a shape designer, the least interesting of all.

But photos are not the devil, as I have said before, look at better illustrators who work from them exclusively. What so you do with photos that makes it good or bad. It is not sufficient to answer the question "working from photos-good or bad?" and judge all according to the answer. It is a tool to be used well or embarrassingly abused. It's mostly abused, though, imho.

"I paint ALOT - Whoever paints the most wins. No such thing as talent."

Not to start that debate again, what you state is a simplification. Can you sustain the interest you have now over many years? That will be the difference, and a large part of talent. There is no substitute for doing it a lot. You cannot think yourself into doing something well. You have to paint as naturally as you write or breathe. Takes time and patience that cannot fade. You will reach plateaus where you will be frustrated and it seems like you are making the same mistakes over and over again. Bierstadt was a hopeless hack, and he blossomed overnight. Many thought he had a little dwarf who did his paintings, because the hopeless painter he was could not have possibly produced what he later did.

So if you can sustain your interest, you will get a lot better. No guarantees that you will become a great master, that is maybe real talent, but no doubt you can learn to be a solid professional.

"I don't read anything from Frank Herbert! - All garbage! (except the first Dune, that was great)"

I want to find the green brain. I remember that one as being pretty cool.

"Most of my anatomy (etc) studies are still done in pencil, but study them I do. I have drawn damn near a thousand skeletons this week. (Goldfinger's book is amazing!!)."

Goldfinger is pretty amazing. I like the old academic approach of working from plaster casts. It is working in the round, so important, so you do not have the danger of just copying values and shapes, has a simplification of materials and surfaces, doesn't move, etc. It is perfect to start with. If I was starting again, this is how I would go. Working from the live model too soon can be wasteful and frustrating.

Keep your mind open and stay curious about everything. Be analytical to a fault. Study all facets of art and art history. Learn how we got where we are today.

God doesn't live in the details, I think s/he is more in the gesture. I work hard at eliminating details that are unimportant. But yeah. important details should be done exactly.

I know that this is not everyones thing, so to detail pictures, just make sure you have enough rez and take the time, as much as you can stand.

Think of it this way. You have a pic of a guy standing there that is 2000 pixels high. You think it would be greatly improved by a wristwatch. OK, paint a wristwatch in roughly the same perspective and lighting in a new file, also at 2000 pixels. Then cut and paste and scale. done!

It is harder to make it look good without the watch.

Also tougher to make it look good without maximum color and value contrast that dodge and burn creates.

That tends to be the first reaction if something doesn't look right, more contrast, more detail. If works, but only up to a point.

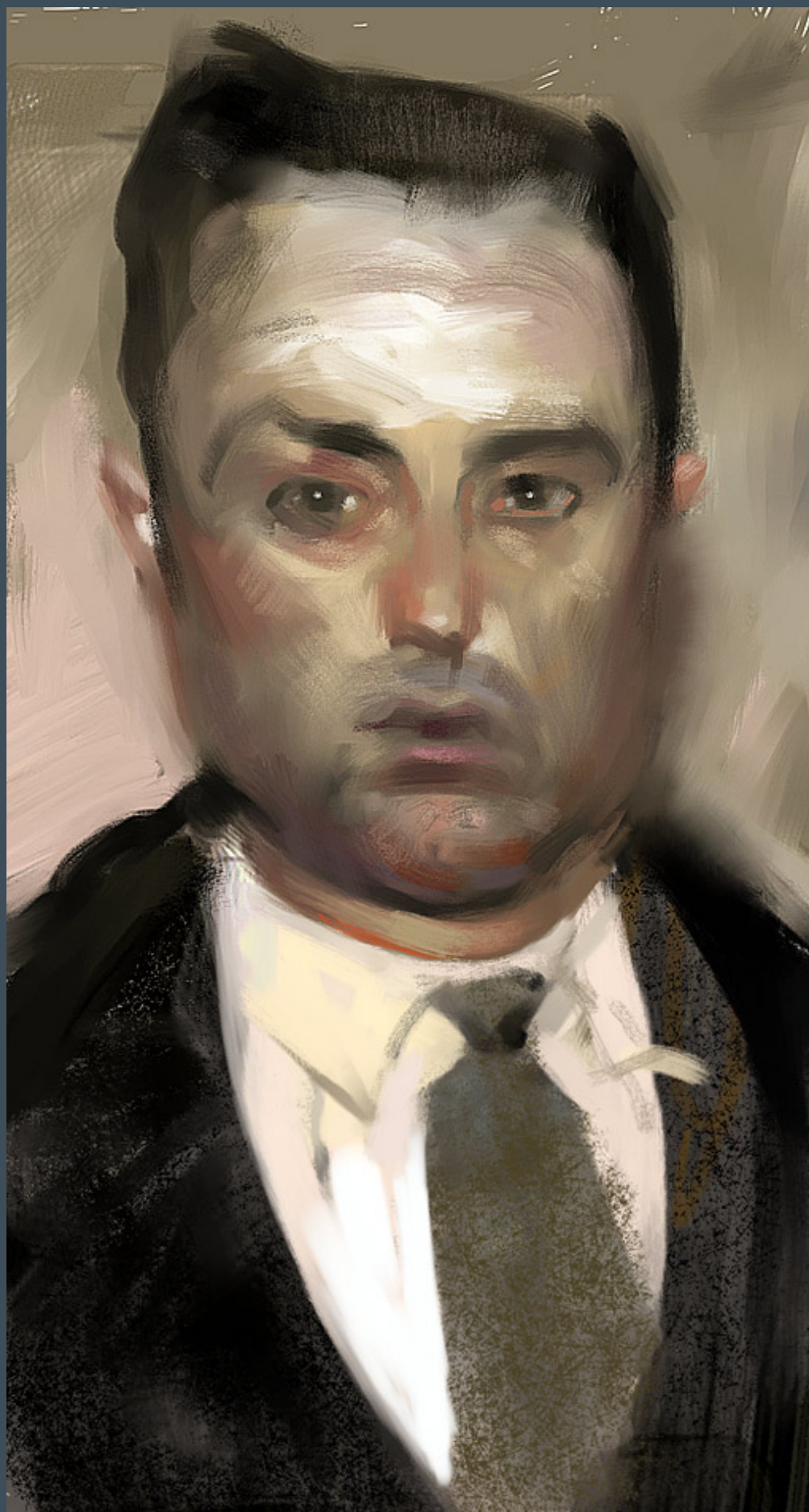
I don't think there is anything inherently wrong with detail, it is just that it is generally the focus of beginning artists to the exclusion of more basic and important stuff. A solid head is good whether it has detail or not. And I don't mean naturalistic drawing only.

Beginning artists gravitate to detail and contrast like moths to a flame. It takes years for them to realize that that amazing pectorals they spent three days rendering is not sitting on the ribcage. "I meant to do that!, that's my style!" Why I don't teach anymore. Good drawing is a prerequisite to just about every kind of representational art there is. If someone is weak here, it screams from 952 miles away, especially to those who know better. I am still struggling to learn how to draw, it is really hard and takes a lot of effort. For years I was not even aware of my vast ignorance. That is probably still true.

Good drawing is, well, it is tough to say, but I think of it as clarity of thought revealed on paper. Look at the le soupe guys- they draw really really well, but it is stylized. Look at Disney animators drawings, does not look like a photo but it is excellent drawing. Look at Rockwell, looks like a photo, it's good drawing too.

So my thought is for a beginner to focus on design and drawing and structure and not worry about the details.

But, with that foundation, details are great. Mister B could draw a lot better than some of his contemporaries, IMHO. And yes, Sargent was an athlete of drawing. Different levels of detail, really great art just the same.



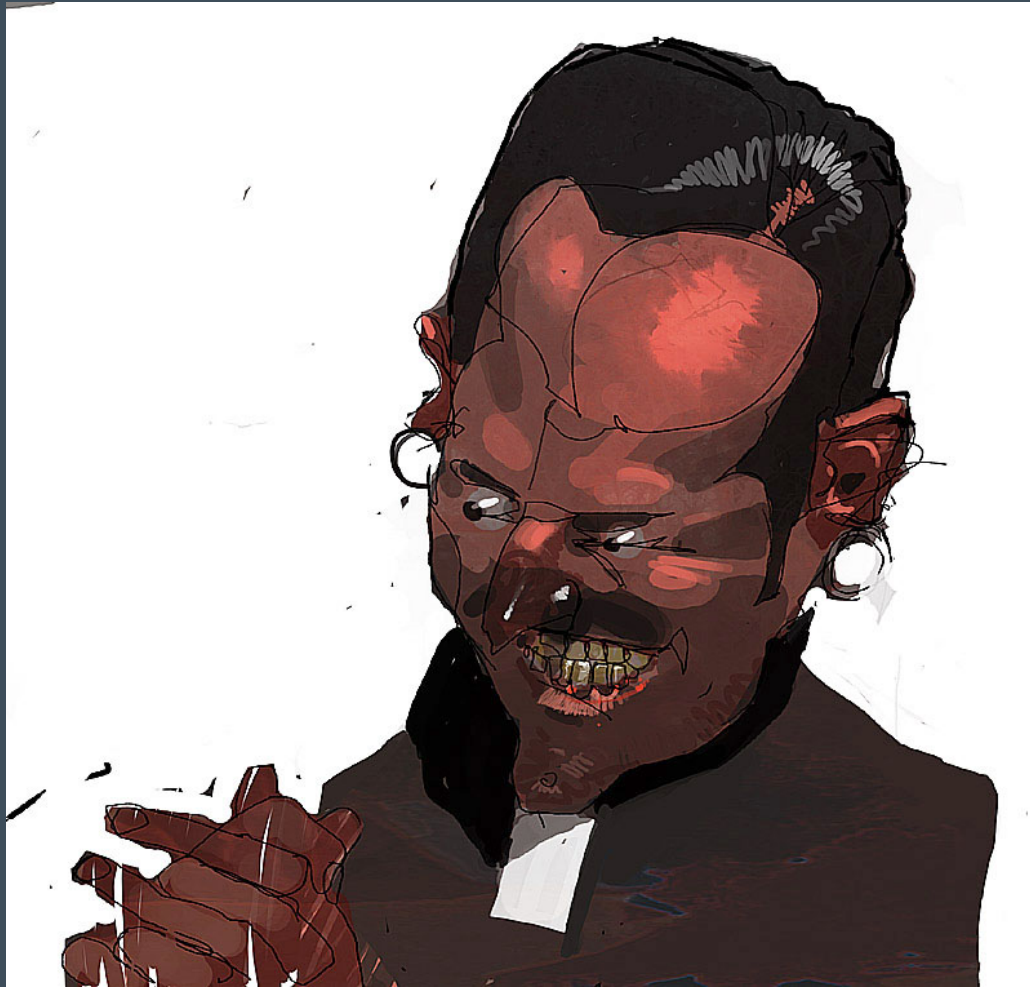
Tried to lay off the gee Ma look at me brushwork on this one. Doesn't quite fit the subject. I purposefully made the head a little off, not symmetrical, one eye a little higher, etc. These guys were a little tweaked, paint em that way. Should put a little tomato sauce on his shirt.

I Lee, I am using the stock stuff with Painter, one of the blend tools. I would not have the slightest idea of how to modify anything. In the most controlled tests, carefully changing one variable at a time, I cannot for the life of me predict those brushes. I just paint at random and try to deal with what it gives me. Kinda fun actually.

I can't remember which tool does this, I think just crank up the Bleed? You can get PS to do it, but not as well.

Question for painter heads, if any are out there. Are the brush categories, like say pastels and brushes, completely different animals? In other words, could you take a pastel variant, change the controls and make it into a camelhair brush? If not, then there is something under the hood that I can't change? If so, what is it that makes these different?

my only requirement was to leave linework in there. I start out with the best intentions, then give up and just paint it . So there.



PAINter

It is strange how trouble with media can affect something so basic as drawing. I really found this true in oil paint. I could not even get the basic proportions of the head correct. Still having trouble with it. You would think that changing media would not have this problem, but I can't seem to get things were I want them in painter, and the value range is way to high and colors are strange. Those should not have anything to do with painter/ps, but I guess it does.

This image has nothing special in it- I have done this kinda crap in PS till I drop. I thought to trobleshoot painter by eliminating variables (like what and how I was painting). Lesson is painter is not photoshop, on a really basic level.



I had an interesting conversation with a fine artist about artists who used to be illustrators and are now fine artists. She said you can always tell, and I had to agree. Academic stuff is fine, but it is playing with fire, it can wrap itself around your head and you will never get it out. It's like the frog boiling and never knowing it. I started out as an ID guy and it took years before that stench lessened. Now I am an illustrator and not much I can do about that, but that's OK.

My point is that you have a very personal approach that works well and that people like. That is a rare combination. Having a personal style and nobody liking it is more common:) So you have done the more difficult, and looking at anatomy books will just make you more like everybody else. There is nothing inherently good about proper perspective or anatomy, I think it is something to do if you have nothing more interesting to say, like me. So don't play with fire and learn all that crap. What you have is a lot more special.

I know that what you do is based on academic stuff and your mind is powerful enough to disregard or unlearn what is pedestrian about it, so take what I say with a grain of salt. You must of stumbled across anatomy books to get where you are.

I have had this discussion with Jason Manley before. He feels that academic training should underly art, and I think that it can infect, and there is a bigger world out there to be discovered.

Everyone knows the bicep inserts beneath the deltoid. Learning this is a means to an end (ART), and maybe you need to know it before breaking it, but I cannot draw it any other way. This could be my own limitation, or a result of academic training. I admire others that can do it otherwise and make it work somehow. I can't 😞

But I would be careful about getting into matte art as a living, more and more of it is going 3d, this has been happening for a while now. It's one of the many reasons why I do so many sketches around here and have made a conscious

effort to move into other areas of illustration. Some say they will never be able to do skies, but they will, or time pressure will cause photos to become a bigger part of things. Probably should- matte painting macho is a sad thing-the shot is the most important, not ones painting ability. But skies in 3-d are not that far off. In the end, you will be a compositor, and a really good one, cause matte artist training is the best you can get for compositing. Or you will be painting in little squares and elements in the far BG or texture painting for 3d.

I think the most fun and the most secure in the long run is designer. But then you half to argue with exceptionally dim people with very strong opinions who also see themselves as designer. My personality is to hide in the closet and say you win, but you can't do that!

I think is the strongest in both drawing and technique, #5. It is the simplest with the most information carried by a solid gesture and good silhouette. The others I feel you are trying to do too much, or render it.

This is a good excercise because you are looking and seeing shape, but you have to be aware of the basic masses or it won't make sense. Seeing these two ways at the same time is hard so you have to practice at it a lot.

Don't try to draw the edges of the shapes, go ahead and make a solid silhouette and break it into light and shadow, similar to #5. Try to be simple and accurate with the shapes, that is what you should spend the time on , not detailing things. If you find yourself wanting to detail it, you know that you missed a bigger truth somewhere. When you get it right, you will want to leave it alone.

Water color is so much fun to see it bleed and run, it is easy to let this prettiness make up for lesser work. I know I lean on that too much when I do the WC thing. Properly done, it makes you think, plan then commit.

#4 and 7 are the weaker of the bunch, for all the reasons stated above.

One tip about seeing shape, look back and forth at your paper and the model very quickly. The afterimage will really show you the differences.

Try to think why you are seeing what you are seeing, what things are going on that result in the shapes and values that you see. Don't worry about edges or color yet, shape and value. That is 90 percent of it.

When you are out wasting time somewhere, lets say waiting in the doctors office, look into the corner of the room. Stare at it for 10 minutes, all the while trying to think what are the factors that go into what you are seeing. If there is no light, all is black, but since you can see something the light is coming from somewhere. So find it, remember it. How many sources are there? are they point sources or diffuse? Are they warm or cool, relative strengths, etc. Can you account for every shape and value that you see? Don't give up until you can.

Then go home and try to reproduce the scene from memory. Do this a while and you will get better at remembering what you see and developing what a teacher of mine called the "well of unconscious cerebration" (buzzword for visual memory). I barely got a C in his class, tough dude.

It is like reproducing a color from memory. The HSB model is great for this. What value, what color, what intensity. Break things down into parts that you can understand. This is really important for eventually working from your head.

In your canyon scene, you have three basic light sources, a strong point source at right angles to the viewer (sun) diffuse overhead (sky, and very strong) and the reflected light from the light canyon walls. One subtle point that is often missed is the soft shadowing of the walls on each other from both the sky and reflected light.

Get yourself some white boxes and reproduce this scene and do the above

exercise. Same lighting, greatly simplified subject. Then you can see the effect of the different light sources without the distraction of the heavy forms and textures and local colors.

And the drawing is a little wonky. Eye level too low, see too much of the top of the bridge (it's well above eye level)

Learning or being exposed to a lot of new info will make your head spin for a while. You will find lack of patience that feeds on itself. You have to give yourself time to digest new info.

I remember having two drawing classes that taught exactly opposite ideas about drawing. "Oh, it's Tues., draw like so and so..." It took a long time to figure out how it all fit together and how they were talking about similar things. Until then, red and green, gray, mud. Not delicate vibrating complementaries.

Work on specific things, pare down what your goals are for the time being. Learn all the muscles of the shoulder and the order of them. Or copy some masterworks. I always got a lot out of that one.

Make some cubes out of cardboard and set it up. Look at what is going on and experiment with moving things around. Try to explain the values that you see by using the rules that you already know. If you see something that is not covered, you can make a new rule or disregard it. There are all kinds of subtle things that happen that fall outside of the body of rules that appeared in the cubes exercise. But what is the point of all this? Eventually you are going to

start adding variables and complexity but still out of your head. If you make too many rules, and it is easy to do looking only at cubes, you will become overwhelmed as you start adding complexity. So the point is to keep it simple, to do only what has the most bang for the buck.

You really start to see benefits from this exercise when you start adding things. Like one white and one black cube, One shiny, one matte, one black satin cylinder and one matte white cone. Then crash the shapes together to make a lamp or something. Then start adding materials and local colors and values to the lamp. Then try a pulse rifle...

One big thing I see on the above drawing is the shaded side of the left cube would be getting quite a bounce from the lit side of the right cube. I agree with Sumaleth's crits

lev_0, my thinking in reserving your extreme lights and darkest is a way to use the middle tones well enough that you don't need the extremes. I see way too much color dodge stuff and crushed blacks where they should not be in beginners artwork. So that breakdown was done with this in mind. I am always happier if I can make things work without resorting to contrast. Then there really is a different value for every surface.

But the real killer that often slips through the cracks is a good separation between light and shadow, and the old bromide, lightest light in shadow is darker than darkest dark in the light. Given of course equal surfaces and materials.

Acrylic is a neat medium, it can be used easily in a variety of ways. The one huge drawback is the value range is restricted, ie the darks are not that dark, and saturation in the dark range is pretty weak.

Don't try to blend wet into wet thick paint. It is better to see the corners on the forms and paint them that way. It is a solid habit to get into anyway. What is top, what is side, where do they meet. When you find the largest radius form in

your image, then maybe you can do the gruntwork of getting everything wet and blending, but only where you need to.

If you absolutely must blend, you can use it like watercolor, (the head below) or impasto. Probably the best it to start thin and then go thicker as you go. The old fat over lean rule. But acrylic is so abusable that you can work the opposite if you want, I am playing with that now some. You can run it through and airbrush if you want. yeech.

If the color underneath has not dried yet and is coming back up, just wait for it to dry. Better yet, work on the rest of the image while waiting, that is also a good habit and will force you to paint the image as a whole as opposed to get frustrated with blending the cylinder of a finger or something.

That has a story behind it actually. Back in the mists of pre-history, when the world was young, PS was at version 2.0 (before layers) and I was working on a show called space rangers at ILM. John Knoll, the brother who designed Photoshop, was (and still is) working there as a Visual Effects Supervisor. His brother Thomas wrote it. I imagine he cold have retired after selling PS to Adobe, but he loves the job.

He was doing some very cool stuff with electric image for the show, and I was doing some of the matte work. I remember him telling me that the idea for PS partially came from motion control in effects work. The idea of the precise registration of multiple passes being analogous to channels, I suppose.

I had first used PS to touch up some physical mattes for a British Petroleum commercial, and remarking what a cool program PS was, John suggested that I try to do the whole thing in PS. Just having started with it, I had no idea of how to paint with it, or even if you could. So the space rangers project was an

experiment for all concerned. It was pretty much kluged photos, but it worked OK.

The show ended and I went back to LA. John suggested that I sign up with AOL. I know it is hard to believe now, but it seemed like a good idea. He was active there at the time. There was even some really good threads where John set a salesman for lightwave straight when he suggested that Jurassic Park could have been done in lightwave. Well, ancient history.

John also suggested that I send some of the things I was doing to Russell Brown, an Adobe PS evangelist. I would not have done so without John Knoll's suggestion. So I sent a disk, and I believe Russell was not very impressed. He sent the disk back with it renamed "craig's velvet paintings" and that was the last I heard from him. As you know, PS has been developed with an eye towards the web design end of things, and that makes business sense. Web people outnumber painters/illustrators 100 to 1. So I guess that either he felt the work was inferior or there was no market for it or a combination of the two.

But now I don't think I fit into Adobe's vision of itself. If you look at the gallery, they like, in general, more hip trendy, urban coffee house kinda stuff. Reminds me of illustrators in school who really wanted to be fine artists. My work is an anachronism at best. If they did like my kind of work, they would get a lot more name-dropping points from places like ILM or Digital Domain or ESC. PS is virtually everywhere.

Let the viewer do the work if you can. You find out what is important and what is not. It's strange, but when you leave out stuff that does not need to be there, the image becomes stronger.

There is 500 years of accumulated knowledge about art that you would be hard pressed to recreate on your own. So education is good, but most of the schools I know of are... not very good.

But even if you are taught academic skills well, that can interfere with creativity. You have to express your creativity but not so tied up in fancy skills that your work looks like an Andrew Loomis book.

Most people do not have jobs through want of drawing skills. You are generally hired to illustrate another's idea, and that takes flexible skill. I think schooling is much better for this.

But you know that some seeds are planted with the right soil with plenty of water and the right temperature and right PH etc. and just die. Others push through 8 inches of pavement.

So my advice would be to go to school, but be aware that you may be sacrificing your individuality to get skills that will help you get hired. Maybe make a careful delineation between your public and private work, but be aware that this is hard to do and one will "infect" the other. A careful balance is really important.

I am only talking about illustration. If you want to be a fine artist in the modern western tradition, DON'T go to a school. Originality of concept is valued beyond all else in that field. Just do what you do and go to a lot of parties and make a lot of important friends and cultivate yourself as "serious"

I think the color won't make much difference one way or another. I tried a little lower camera, a little longer lens to flatten out the shapes a bit and give them a more abstract quality. The figure ground relationship in yours Sumaleth could be better. If you don't want to muck around with lenses, cropping is a cheap trick (that works sometimes).

Make two bounding boxes in a 3-d program and play with it. Great fun.

If something is buggin you about a pic, 99% of the time it is not color. It is drawing, then value, then composition, with color coming way down there. And if it is color, deciding on a different local color for an object is way down on the color hierarchy as well. At least it seems to be for me. But I know it is tough, when you don't know how to fix a drawing, what can you do? I face that all the time. It is tempting to screw around with other stuff in a vain attempt to spackle over the problem.

The lighting in this scene would be about as diffuse as you can get. It is overcast, so you have the bias to the full hemisphere of the sky, but the snow throws light around even more, both the stuff on the ground and falling.

well you can see what I did and take it or leave it.

man, I did this once, my FREAKING MAC crashed, taking the whole thing with it. So I redid it fast, sorry.

Costume loosely based on Lady Iboshi from Princess Mononoke. Taking Flushgardens advice and layin off the gimmick brushes and textures, layer compositing tricks (color dodge etc). Just the drawing and values, Maam.



All I wanted to do here is illustrate my point earlier about eyes. In general, the eye is in a socket and behind eyelashes and also under a brow, and is shaded most of the time. It is very common to paint the whites too white. But it is a general problem as well. The eyes are what people look at the most, and so people paint them bigger and with more contrast than is really there. So you have to learn to look really hard and see just what is there and what is not. It will surprise you. I am learning to do this slowly.

So you can see that I painted the form of the brow and socket with care, and if you do that, your eye fills in the eye. I did exaggerate this a bit for effect. But

you have to know the generalized forms of the head to do this from your head.

Try not to work out of your head at this stage, you are not learning as much and reinforcing bad habits. Draw from life (your hands if models are scarce) or master copies. No photos yet. You have to be much further along to use them correctly, and it will turn you into a shape artist that will limit you further along. Understand the forms that light acts on to create the shapes that you see. That is the order, not the other way around.

Here is a project for you. Take any artist you like that paints academically, and do a forgery for me. Post your copy and post your source. If I can tell which is which, you are not done. You have to learn to subject yourself to what you are seeing, you are not getting that yet. This is a good exercise, and a good way to look at how another artist thinks.

Don't use more colors, that is the last thing you need. Use fewer

My thought is to simplify and break down the process of learning into smaller steps. Learning about transparency of skin before basic drawing will just confuse, I think. Learn form (as a sculptor would see things), how light works on form, how value describes this, then about color. Then fancy strokes.

Matthew, in addition to the master copy (which will help media control and learning to look Very Carefully) get Vanderpool or Bridgman. Leave loomis alone (they are coming to burn my house now). You can get both as Dover editions. Copy these drawings. As you copy them you cannot help but see and think of how they work.

Go to <http://www.vilppustudio.com>, he is really solid in the way he thinks.

A radical suggestion, get any of the drawing books by Jack Hamm. Yes, he was a cartoonist, and a very good one. As with animators, he knew about form. One of the finest storyboard artists I ever saw said he learned to draw by copying Jack Hamm books from cover to cover. I did not understand the reasoning

behind this at the time; I thought he was pulling my leg.

If you look at good caricatures you will see that the forms of the head have been exaggerated, not just the shapes. You have to deconstruct the head in your mind and reconstruct it. Very difficult to do successfully. Once you can think this way, the head you see in that fashion ad will be very different than the one you see now.

If you stick with copying the shapes you see, you will never be able to draw out of your head, and you will be very limited to what you can do with whatever reference you might have. So do it right from the start! This is the real reason to me for drawing from life, so you CAN'T sit there and copy the shapes you see. You are forced to make your brain think about what is going on in space. If you don't have the time, money, etc to draw from life, draw your hands or in a mirror. Don't become another casualty of photography. Learn to use it well by drawing from life first. And don't trace anything. You have to be really advanced to trace well. And tracing and claiming you did not is like the 4 year old covered in chocolate with a belly ache saying they didn't eat the cake. It is painfully obvious. There is nothing wrong with it at all if is done well, but if done too early in development it will just delay learning anything.

BTW, this is the stage that I am at right now. I am struggling to understand form and how to depict it on a 2-d surface. The illustrator training I had was very much get some ref, stylize it in some hip way, dodge the photographers attorney, call it a day. Luckily 10 years of job experience and earlier ID training finally got me off the golf course back into the life studio before it was too late. Maybe it is. Don't make the same mistakes.

Yes, I understand the exposure combo idea, been around quite a while. People even did it before digital. Much more difficult I would guess. As far as using it for study, I suppose it is better than photos with crushed areas. Exposure limitations in photography are ONE of the reasons to work from life, though. The other, probably more important, is to prevent you from copying shapes and to internalize the forms you perceive and feel and try to describe them.

Photos, unless you are really advanced, are the best way to stop yourself from growing, and they are addictive because it's easy bang for the buck and it takes very little time or effort to get good at duplicating them (relatively speaking). And if anyone quotes me on that without taking the context of all that I am saying I will hunt you down with a rusty axe. 'Mullins hates luci-jockies!' I did quite a bit of photo copying early on and it is great for learning to control your media.

Working from life can be pretty overwhelming if you are starting from scratch. It might sound strange, but working from photos are the very beginning might be a good idea, until you can control things enough to duplicate the photo, then move to life, and don't whine about the hit your art seems to take. Yes, it won't look as "photo real" as your photo stuff and you might not get as many "wowas" from people who don't know what is going on but you are moving into a much bigger world.

The best idea is to work from casts of human forms. Why not a still life? Because the standards that are required for pulling off a convincing rendering of a human form are greater than for a can or flowers. The viewer is not as easily forgiving. And the casts don't move, they have no reflectivity, no maddening variations in warm and cool skin tones, do it at home, etc. A great place to start. You can buy them on the web!

So before you think about using better photos, work from life more. If you have the time and resources to screw around with compositing exposures, you have the time to sit there and look.

Once you have a few thousand hours from life, you will look at photos and use them in a very different, and I feel better, way.

I hope that answers your question, it is just my opinion, and I don't mean that in an offhand gee shucks kind of way. There are a lot of ways to learn and do art. Anyone could legitimately disagree with everything I have said here and be correct in his or her way.

There is a way to plot the grid of a distant VP, but the cure is worse than the disease.

They used to sell perspective grids. Just lay your tissue over it and transfer what you need or start drawing. They worked, but you end up with comments like "nice image, but I would have used the Chartpak 603-b grid with the slightly wider lens..." A little mechanical and limiting.

Now there is an easier way thanks to the MIRACLE BREAKTHROUGH of modern technology:) Use a 3-d program to set up a few subdivided planes. Set your camera and lens how you want. Print and lay the tissue uponeth. And it can really help if you make a few bounding box cubes to block out the main masses, you can really make sure you are not letting a improved composition slip by. If you are really good at 3-d, build in some more detail. Or just skip the drawing altogether and build it and render and ship it.

When I did illustration for a living, like with paints, I would do a layout fairly small, say 14x17. This is small enough that you really can get a VP a long way off he page. Once that was finished, I needed to get that drawing to 30x40 or thereabouts, so it was off to Kinkos at 4AM to blow it up on the copier. Sometimes it took several generations and then you had to tape it together.

And now a trick that comes from Syd Mead himself. Gouache is opaque, meaning that you could transfer your drawing to the board and then the blockin would obliterate it. No good. So how to get the drawing on top of the gouache blockin? Tape the corners of the drawing as reinforcement, and press thumbtacks through it and into the board. There you have perfect registration marks so you can transfer, paint, retransfer, etc, with perfect alignment and no slipping. Also, use a graphite sheet in-between the board and the drawing, don't rug graphite on the back of the drawing. It's messy and inefficient, and you often have to go over the same lines several times.

So if you ever see a Mead original out of a frame, this is what those little holes are for.

One more super cool tip, in a 1-point perspective situation, you will find your VP getting painted over all the time. Take a thumbtack and punch a hole to mark it. It's precise and permanent. You can also see this on mead originals.

yes avoid the dodge+burn unless you want to make every little form into a sphere and make an oversaturated mess out of the color:)

Try to think of the planes of the largest masses of the body. The side plane of the arm and torso and the head. In a side light, the facing planes will get lit, and the front planes will be in shadow.

Ok how to show that. If you look at comics, the shadow area is flat black. It does not have to be black, but it has to be flat, as in little activity or contrast. In the lit areas, you can have a little lighter and darker to show smaller more subtle forms. But here is the point often missed- keep the shadow and lit value SEPARATE. Thou shalt make no value in shadow lighter than the darkest area of what is in light. Read that slow. The shadow has values in 2-3-4 and light has values 7-8-9, if you think of white as 10 and black as 0.

So apply this thinking front planes of the body in shadow, side in light.

Don't worry about color, one thing at a time.

I love painting and have devoted the first half of my life to it. I am quite familiar with Pyle and academic art in general. I believe Pyle's principles are sound but are in no way exhaustive, and your strict adherence to them is very limiting for you.

I would suggest not reading anyone's words unless you can resist the temptation to pedantism. If you can handle it, read as much as you can.

I think a better way to learn about art is to look with truly open eyes at art and artists and the world and not use words at all. Soak it up with a different part of your brain.

Jason Manley and I have gone around a bit about academics. He believes that creativity can only rest on a solid academic foundation, and I believe that foundation limits you. I suppose how importantly you view creativity as a value in art is a big part of this debate. A lot of artists ask me “so what do I do to kick ass??!!” I don’t know. My only advice is what I said above. Absorb like a sponge, sell your soul to no school, your path will reveal itself.

Far from being “respected,” artrenewal is a laughingstock for most of the artists that I know, myself included. It isn’t the fact that they like 19th century art, but the raving fascist area 51 paranoia self righteous rage they have about it that is kinda scary and funny. I bet they are going to start quoting Revelations next.

I disagree that the profession of artist/illustrator is 'in a state of decline.' I think the art world is much better off than it was under the Salon. So you can’t get on the front page of art news because you can render toes like no other? Oh well.

I remember when I first started doing these looser sketches people were very much puzzled, almost insulted.

As I have said before, imitation doesn't bother me artistically at all, but when so many do things that look like my stuff it has the effect of maybe overexposure and shortening the commercial life of the style. Prices are driven down as well, and I am sure few here have my overhead.

But there is nothing that I or anyone can or should do. I remember working in a Syd Mead style early on. I am sure the talented here will leave me in the dust soon enough, that is the way art moves.

There is no such thing as good and bad art in an absolute sense. It is entirely subjective. It all makes perfect sense when you surrender and accept that uneasy idea.

To my grandmother Thomas Kincade is a better artist than Michelangelo. And her aesthetic experience in looking at her Kincade is comparable to someone with an advanced degree looking at a Rothko.

Art is an artificial construct; it has no nature outside our own definitions.

You might say "but spooge, nice tie by the way, your work is pretty academic and falls in line with the European academic tradition..." Yes it does, but I do not make the mistake that my tastes are in any way reflective of any objective standard. It is what I like and appreciate. I think a lot of people think that something is good art and then proceed to work that way, because it is "the proper way."

So which is better, eastern or western art? It is sad that a brain could even formulate the question.

Why does art need to be measured and compared and quantified? I think it is a reflex that is part of our culture. If you think about it for a little bit, you see that it is pointless trying to do this.

You can have the strongest opinions in the world as to what is good and bad, and that is fine, just realize that that it is your own standard, not anyone else's. And it is not that you are right and they are ill-educated big-footed hillbillies and if they could just be enlightened the way you are, they would see that X really is the greatest velvet painter of all time.

But if you accept the assumptions within a school of thought, you get a lot closer to being able to define good and bad. But you are limiting yourself. Look at Schiele's drawings. Are they bad? They are in the same universe as the European academics. But they are uh, out of proportion and he was a pretty strange guy, he should have been drawing truth and beauty, the real values in art. Oh geez. You see even when you go a little down the path of good and bad it has a very negative effect of all artists. It is great for petty bourgeois

politician artists who wish to create a career out of controlling every one else's definition of truth, but it is anathema to art. Um, IMHO.

Hi Jason and Wayne

(some to Jason, mostly to Wayne)

What I am responding to is the assertions about ART with capitals. I am an illustrator, and I do not confuse my tastes with Art or any kind of universal ideals. I think people do what they like, and then invent a world with rules that place themselves at the top of things. Rationalization is what we humans do best. Do what you like and realize that that is what it is; it is not binding on anyone else. I think absolutists get frustrated with a relativist because a relative world makes it difficult to force people to worship them.

I had Burne Hogarth's drawing class at school, from 9 to 4 once a week. The morning was given to endless nonsensical rants about Art with polysyllabic words he did not understand. I remarked to him once if we accepted his definitions he would be the greatest artist that ever lived. He said "of course I am!!" He was only half kidding.

If someone wants to be an illustrator like me, sure, I have always preached the fundamentals here, drawing, then values, then color, roughly speaking. But be aware that there are compromises, like everything else in life. This type of training will infect your thinking, and you will likely never escape it. I walk into a gallery and I can see a mile away who was an illustrator and who was not. It seeps in to the bones like a frog boiling to death. And this is even within the world of naturalistic art. If you value originality of conception as most important in art, stay away from learning "foundations." If you like 19th century artists and illustrators, like I do, you cannot learn enough.

But please realize that you are paddling in a tiny backwater of the Art World. That is where I am and quite happy with it, thanks. There are many people who find Greatness in Art is different places than you, and you can't say they are wrong, as they can't say you are wrong.

A lot of it comes back to values. Which is the greater value, justice or mercy? Freedom or order? Originality or continuity? People have different answers to these questions, and that is fine. You might say there has to be an answer but there is not.

And Pyle's rules are great, but in no way fundamental. They are applicable to a subset of illustrative styles. To say they underlie all Art is beyond naïve. I would say drawing is a far more fundamental value within the tiny world of illustration, and there are many, many ways to draw. There are so many ways to show form, and if there is any underlying principle of naturalistic art, it is in the different ways to show form. Using value is a higher order system that is ignored successfully in many different illustrative styles. Pike's work runs on shape, not really value. This is why, Wayne that I feel you are doing yourself a disservice by placing Pyles ideas so highly. And from the work you posted, you do not understand the principles he set forth, even in the copies.

And if you take a wider definition of illustration, as in visually expressing an idea, there are many ways to do this outside of anything Mr. Pyle ever dreamed of. Look at some of the illustrator annuals from 60's, 70's. A lot of experimentation was going on with how to express a feeling or idea. That is your real job, and there are many interesting ways to do it.

I have said this before, but. how do you view Eastern Art? As primitive degenerate scribblings? Or a way of thinking that you know nothing of? If we accept your position that there are physiological principles that underlie all Art, we should see much more similarity between East and West than we do.

BTW You don't see with your eyes, you see with your brain. The inverted shapes on the back of the retina have no meaning without the brain to interpret them.

1. The grain is coming through in your drawings cause yes they are small for a 6b pencil and the shape style of drawing. Try a harder lead to work at this size. in the future try a no 2 pencil and just typing paper.

2. I would recommend these more strongly, but I have not looked at it in a while, the betty edwards books are really pretty good. Try them
3. this is something I have suggested many times, and has helped me hugely early on, master copies. Get a book of Sargents portrait drawings (dover) and some charcoal (in various hardnesses) and scientifically go about making an exact duplication of a drawing. Not your interpretation, not an approximation, but a forgery that will stand up to a magnifying glass. BE PRECISE, be exact. You will begin to see how it works. I still do these from time to time and there is no better way to get inside anothers head.

Well, if that is true, then that means why we were talking is to bash one another over the head in order to convince the other that we have a license on Truth. That is more depressing to me.

I think the illusion that one is right in matters of preferences is one of the most powerful illusions that we are subject to. I feel I am right all the time, as does everyone else, but the chance that I am right and everyone else is wrong is pretty slim to none. A lot of people can't deal with the probabilities of this.

Of course I have opinions, many of them, but I fight the temptation to mistake them as fact. Because my perception and information are limited, and in matters of preference, taste, ART, there is no way to define things. I had an aesthetic experience studying a bug smashed on my windshield; it was more beautiful in the abstract than any art I have seen.

I think one of the better habits of artists is to find the aesthetic where it was not before. Definitions really put a huge crimp on that.

For instance, I was shoveling several tons of chicken shit the other day and I

was struck that it looked a lot like dirt. Then I thought about it, that shit is just partially decayed organic matter. It is stuff that used to be living and is now returning to the simpler components from which it was made. That is what dirt is (To be correct, dirt has mineral particulates in varying degrees and sizes that are inorganic). Dirt and shit are the same thing. Certain gases have dissipated from dirt so that it does not smell (it is just further along in the decomposition process), but they are the same thing. I looked out over the fields with brown beautiful earth poking out here and there, and realized that we live on a giant ball covered in a relatively thin layer of shit. Now you might think that is a depressing thought, and to some it might be. If you hold onto an “exalted, uplifting” vision of man as divinely inspired, it could be blasphemous. But to me, I take it as a given that life and existence are a good idea, so I have changed my opinion of shit. I will never say I don’t give a shit, because we all live by it, and yes, people buy it, like I bought my chicken shit.

I might sound like a smartass saying this, and maybe it doesn't apply to you, but it really helped me. Get rid of the TV (physically gone) and games, and in my case no more golf.

I switched my career path about 5-6 years ago after I saw that matte work would be changing/disappearing. I wanted to diversify, both for better chance of employment and less boredom. But my figure skills were pretty lame. It has worked out, matrix was the last mattes I will ever do.

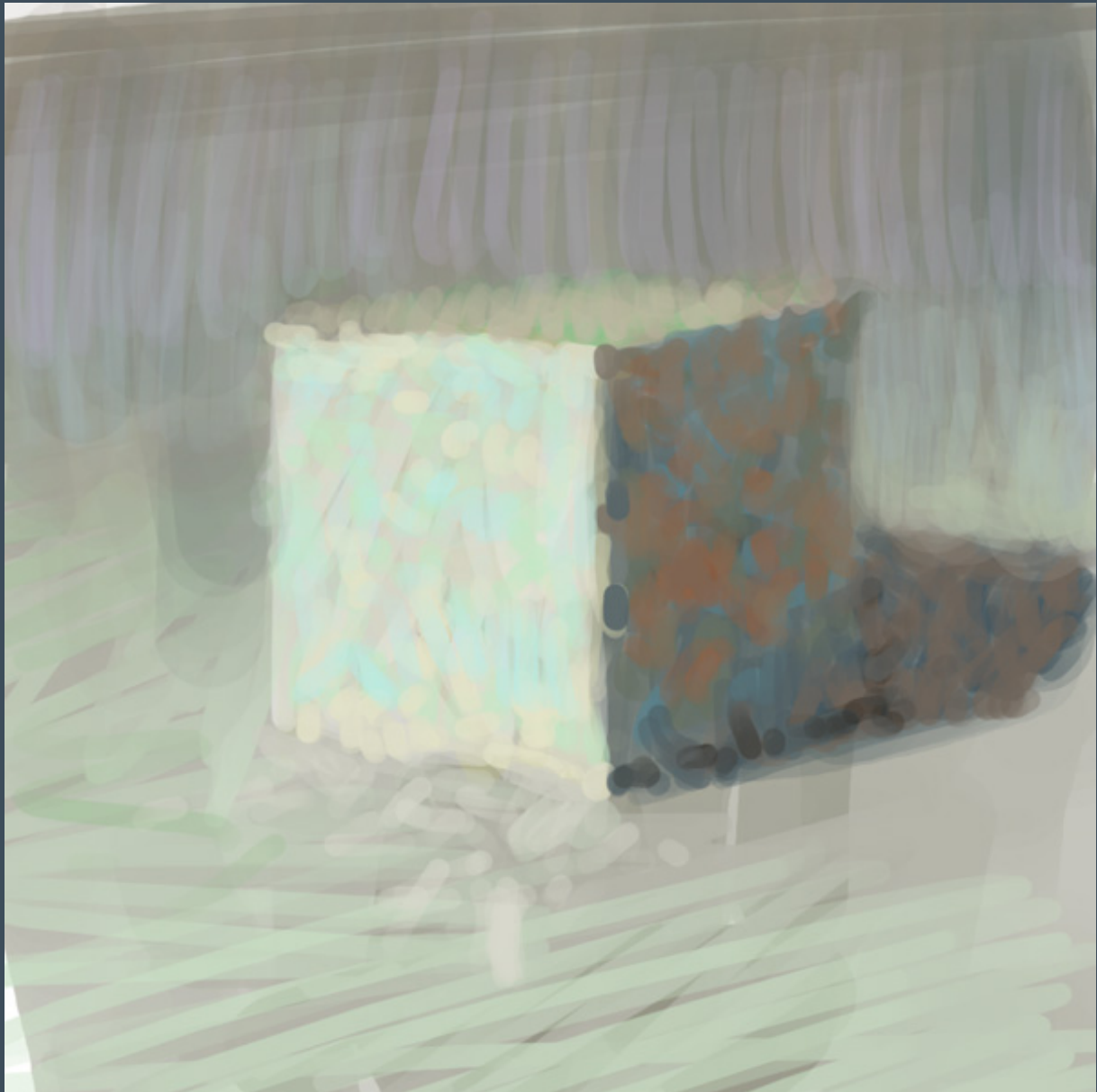
Goto Vilppus sessions, no excuses! For 5 years, every week. You can be in the hospital or the class, nowhere else:)

The school makes less difference than the teacher.

That reminds me, I was in life class today and I looked up and the model was sitting there and everyone was looking at their drawings. I guess you have to do that sometimes, but I looked out of curiosity and people were sawing away with the charcoal for 5 minutes at a time, then glance at the model, back to sawing. It's like they looked at the model to just make sure it was not break time. If you ask me, and I know you didn't, sorry, look at the model and think about it before sawing with the pencil.

There can be a logical reason, or it can be arbitrary or even just design/decorative. As long as you get the value right, you can't go far wrong with any color or saturation. Ceenda, the green grass problem is a good one. Look at real grass, yes it is green but there are a million variations and a lot of it is dead, which is brown (not really a color, but a dark orange red) So these compliments of strong local color bounce in the eye like a Monet creating the richness that I think you are after. Also, the transparency of plants gives a bright yellow green when backlit in strong sunlight. The surfaces are also a little reflective, so they pick up a cool bluish tone when light from the same side as the viewer and especially if they are facing upwards towards a clear sky. So there you have a rationale for doing more than reaching for the grass green.

Here is a cube with arbitrary color thrown in, with no system at all, simply to show that the color does not make things read.



But something is not quite right. I doubt a client would buy it if you gave them this lecture after making your grass purple. So start with just varying your color while keeping the values correct, seeing what looks more natural than not. Then start looking around at stuff and noticing the color information that you see, and try to explain why it is there. This will help you remember it later. So it is a little like anatomy, just have to persevere and learn it over time.

here is a tip from old illustrators, and I am breaking the fellowship by telling you. They don't know I know. It's called "stroking the short axis. Most shapes are longer in one direction than the other, and if you fill them with any kind of gestural quality, the illustrator answer is to stroke across the shortest axis. Some illustrators do this like a nervous tick. Sargent did exactly the opposite, but, uh, he knew what he was doing.

looking at Remington



I would suggest drawing more. (drawing does not really just mean using a sharp instrument and use mostly line) And the idea of speed paint is not really fast execution, that's OK, but it is more learning how to simplify to what is important, and the speed comes from the simplification. Like that pine tree silhouetted there. You painted it fast, let's say 2 minutes. The challenge is to look at pine trees, understand them in the round, then analyze the shapes that result from the form in the lighting situation you have. That takes a while. I guess that is what I mean by drawing. Now with this better understanding, paint them again in 2 minutes, it should be better. So think for an hour, paint for a minute.

And don't be afraid to paint out what you have done and do it over. Paint those 2 minute pine trees 20 times, till you get them right. This is instead of rendering needles for an equivalent period of time, which would just make things worse and worse. Contrasty detail without understanding is not your friend.

The American way of life is to spend 20 percent more than you earn, always. Your eyes would fall out if you saw the figures on consumer debt in this country. All those zippy cars you see on the 101 freeway? Money they don't have.

I am saying do exactly the opposite of the American way. Live on 20% (or more) less than what you make, it can be done. I shop at the Salvation Army and buy used stuff when I have to buy stuff at all. A lot of my clothes I find in the jungle, from people who don't put em back on after swimming in the waterfalls here. Find your pleasure in making money as opposed to spending it.

Yes, I am a cheap bastard and it runs my wife crazy.

Why? Ever priced a college education? Retirement is getting longer as life spans increase. They are redoing the actuarial tables now. Doesn't there always seem to be an odd expense that you never counted on? Ever see a 70 year old

working at McDonalds or driving a cab? People who shaved things a little too close or who were a little too optimistic. In the 1970's when money markets were making 17 percent people retired and moved to Florida expecting that this would continue. They had to go back to work, like my Uncle, selling shoes.

Whatever you are making now, even if it is good, you cannot plan on it continuing. Ask some of the Feature animators who were making solid six figures in the mid 90's. Not a cloud in the sky then, off to the BMW dealer. They are hurting pretty bad right now, so now it's off to Maya classes. Expect reverses and things unforeseen, they will happen. In my case, I think the world is filling up pretty rapidly with fake digital Sargent imitations. I am planning for the day I can't give my crap away.

The only way to really insulate yourself from things like this is to live well within your means, whatever that may be. That is not the American way at all.

Inspired by mister sparth.



But really I don't feel I have the skill yet to do that kind of thing. I am happy that I can communicate through gesture and posture and pose. That is the biggest area of learning. Also, I got a good education in ID, not illustration. The ill program had gone way downhill by the time I got there. I had one head drawing class. ONE. Should have had two a semester for the duration. I did have some excellent teachers, but not near enough. I have been trying to piece the rest of it together on my own.

But also I like the figure in its environment. If you paint a head then that is the subject. But you bring up a good point. I see some of the really really good work around and it has the figure and a head and expression and environment. I guess that I also like to do things quickly, doing really finished stuff is like giving birth. I also seem to lose interest after I have solved the compositions and block-in. The rest is sit and pick, when I could do a lot more images in the given time. Also, you invest that much time, and what if it sucks? Waaaa! It would also involve probably photography and models, also things I don't like to have to deal with.

Inshield, that is the rez it was painted at. As far as the contrast, that is an interesting point. Blockhead clients sometimes demand that all atmospheric perspective be on a separate layer. Ok, so the shadow in that doorway 2 mile away should be black? It is not possible to do this. Remember, the client could do what you do much better, it is just that they are doing really important stuff. So just let them lift their leg on it, and they now have some degree of authorship. "Well this clod illustrator painted this thing and then I fixed the color balance and now it's brilliant! What would we have done without my big picture aesthetic genius?" Having art directors screw with artwork is an unfortunate byproduct of Photoshop. Never used to be that way. And invariably they bump contrast, wipe out backgrounds, rim light figures with a chainsaw, etc.

Remember, you can never go wrong with blue shiny things.

It really makes me value the clients who are good, and there are many. The bad ones are *generally* the exception.

The solution is to paint a reasonable amount of atmosphere as you do it, and add some goo on top so you can play with it afterwards. So the answer to your question is it was largely painted as you see it, with some tiny tweaking afterwards.

I mean that a city is complex, with so many different surfaces and local values (dark buildings, light buildings, shiny buildings, dark shiny building, light shiny buildings, concrete, etc.) that it can get really confusing. In diffuse light, think about horizontal surfaces high up getting the most light, and vertical surfaces getting less. Horizontal surfaces at the ground get somewhere in between. Think of it like this:

To figure out what value a plane should be, imagine yourself glued to the plane and seeing all the things that it sees. Is it bright there? In shadow? What is making it the value that it is? Keep in mind that in diffuse light the sky is a big hemisphere of light.

when you work from photos, don't make it too easy. Look at it and try to understand why each value is the way it is. That way you will learn to abstract it and use it later in different situations. Copying shapes without understanding them is barely above watching TV. If you think you understand what is going on in a photo well, test it by changing something. Then you will see if something is slipping by in your understanding.

This is just a thought in picture form, not sure if it helps at all.

The only thing concrete I could say about lighting is the extreme atmospheric

effects that happen underwater. Things quickly diffuse. Also, the light source is the whole surface of the water, and this would make the lighting very diffuse as well, no core cast shadow system at all. Probably the local value difference between the pants and skin in shadow would be hard to see. Atmospheric perspective also clamps the lights as well, so that collar on the dutchman really come forward.

edges would start at totally lost and come up to soft at their shapest.

I would say ID is more important to me than Illustration. There are some important caveats. Look at how Trans guys draw figures. Nuffsaid. With the exception of the life/figure classes, Illustration was kind of a wasteland. BUT, look at the work I do, and it is not very conceptual, depends more on traditional drawing and painting. The illus program was trying it best to get people to do anything but more airbrush ad Ill, anything but Loomis, anything to move illustration “forward” Matt Mahurin was the golden standard. Before you think I am being sarcastic, I am not, really. It is a little sad that all of my ID cohorts are doing well in the profession they were trained for, but my illo ones are not working much at all, with a few exceptions. Art Center is gambling, for it’s own glory, to produce an original illustrator, The One how can fly and hang in galleries and get the respect of fine artists that they crave so much. Never underestimate the inferiority complex of the illustration world. I am a shining example! But you have to go through a lot of lost failures to get the peach.

I was glad to have the Illo training that I had, it made me a better artist, certainly more aware. But it left me with not enough skills. I guess there is only so much you can cram into one program. Take classes in both programs! They don’t like this, a Frankenstein like me might result. But push all you can. And remember, don’t depend on anyone or any school to learn you what you need. The best people are the ones who suck the information out of a place, who look for it. The failures are the ones who sit back and whine that the program is no good.

There seems to be a political suspicion that if you don't fall into blind acceptance of this as the basis for all legitimate illustration, you are somehow one of those evil ignorant Bolsheviks who want to tear down all that is Good and Right in the world. Kind of like if you are for the legalization of pot, you must be a user. I think I understand where this reactionary impulse comes from, and it isn't pretty.

It does not help that it is written in Fofoo King James English, made manifest and such. I can see Charlton Heston as Moses reading this.

People want rules as a shortcut to work that is undeniably Great. Follow the rules and everyone will love you. Sorry it's a lot tougher than that. I wish someone could boil it down to rules, but it is too complex, too caught up in expressing a lifetime of observations and thoughts and feelings. I have no doubt there are Rules, but our current understanding of the human animal is several orders of magnitude too crude to do this.

You have to realize that to be true to the artist in you, you might be out there all alone, with nobody else understanding you.

If you love that style of illustration, yes, it is very important. But to a lot of illustrators, it is not important at all. There are many ways to show form, and that is all he is talking about. And to those who would treat it as a Gospel, it is very dangerous. They will get trapped in the mannerisms of that time period. I have seen Loomis worshippers even draw eyebrows on women that look like that style of makeup from the 40's. The brain shuts down, the shades get drawn, they go to sleep.

You are a person and an artist, your perceptions and who you are as individual take precedence over technique. Yes, learn all of it you can, but be so careful about coming to the conclusion that you can know Truth in easily expressed bromides. I have spent my professional life learning these academic rules, and I have learned to wear an asbestos suit and use fire tongs. I love them dearly, and have been a great help, but they can swallow you whole.

It's a constant struggle between the need to explore, the need to learn what

others have discovered, and the need to be who you are. You have to retain the freedom to evaluate what you learn about the past as valuable or not to you.

Van Gogh needed shoring up? Thankfully he did not have Art Renewal do a clockwork orange on him to “fix” him. I would rather have a Van Gogh on my wall than a Loomis, any day. And I like Loomis, I really do! I am making a point, is all.

And in this Spirit, put down the Loomis and pick up The Art Spirit, by Robert Henri. Good antidote.

The test for an absolute truth is does it underlie all art? Clearly this is not the case in what Pyle said. I can talk here all day giving examples of art and illustration that do not follow these guidelines. Therefore it is not an absolute truth. Unless you have a razor of a razor thin definition of art.

And that teacher made a good point. He was trying to get people to think. I would thanks to him for the whack on the head that I probably needed and go off to head drawing class and learn how the jaw pivots under the skull. Both messages are vitally important. Instead there were probably orangutans who probably petitioned to get him fired.

I did NOT say you don't need academic rules, or you should not know or study them. I am saying that you need to know as much as you can, but what I am saying is to not look at them as absolutes.

The true spirit of the scientist/artist is to look even more carefully at things that function outside the rules. That is how the rules evolve and grow and deepen. If you have the idea that present rules are Absolute, you have stopped everything.

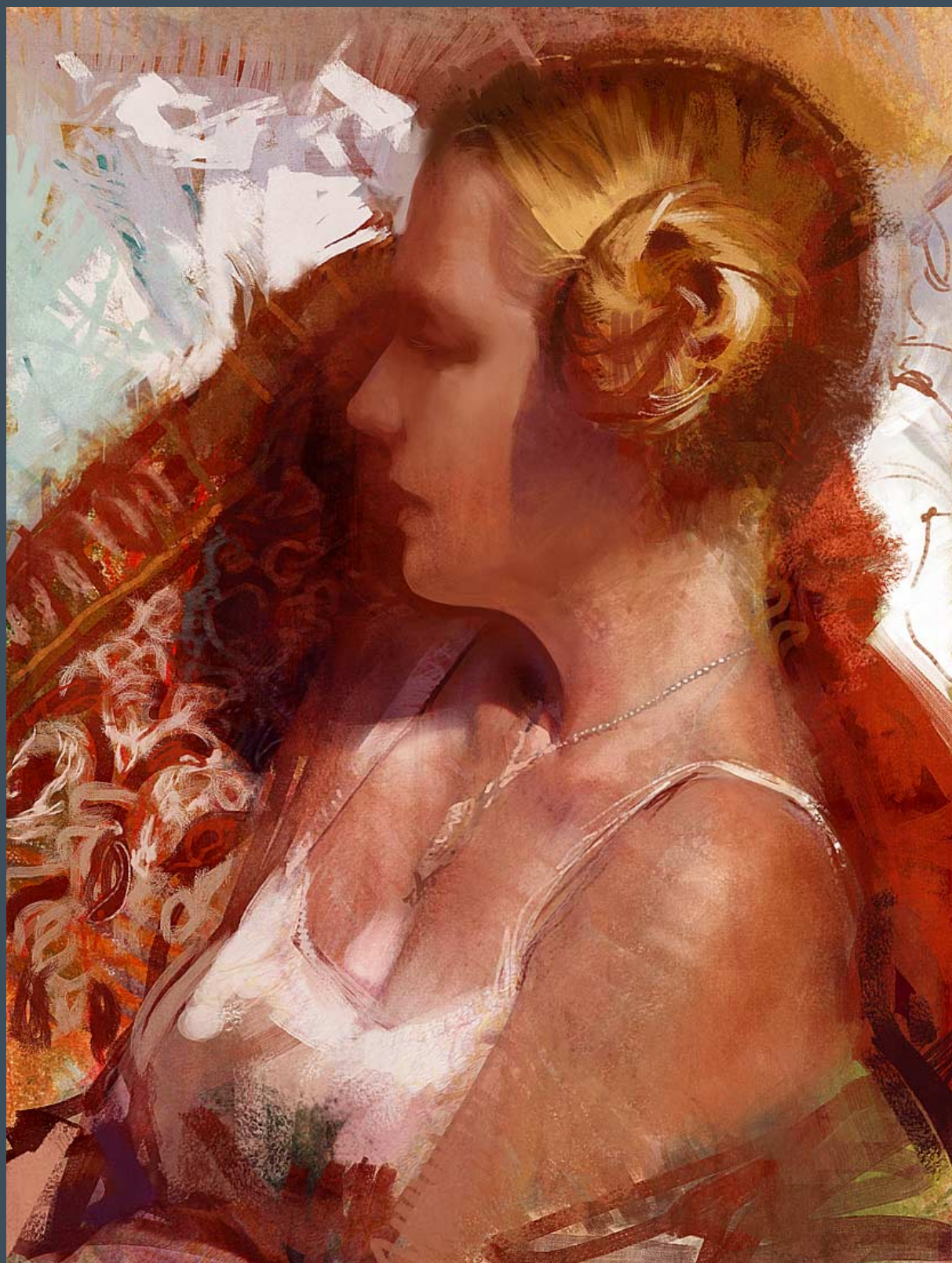
The first step on the road to knowing anything is to acknowledge your own and our collective ignorance. This is as close to an absolute that I have ever been

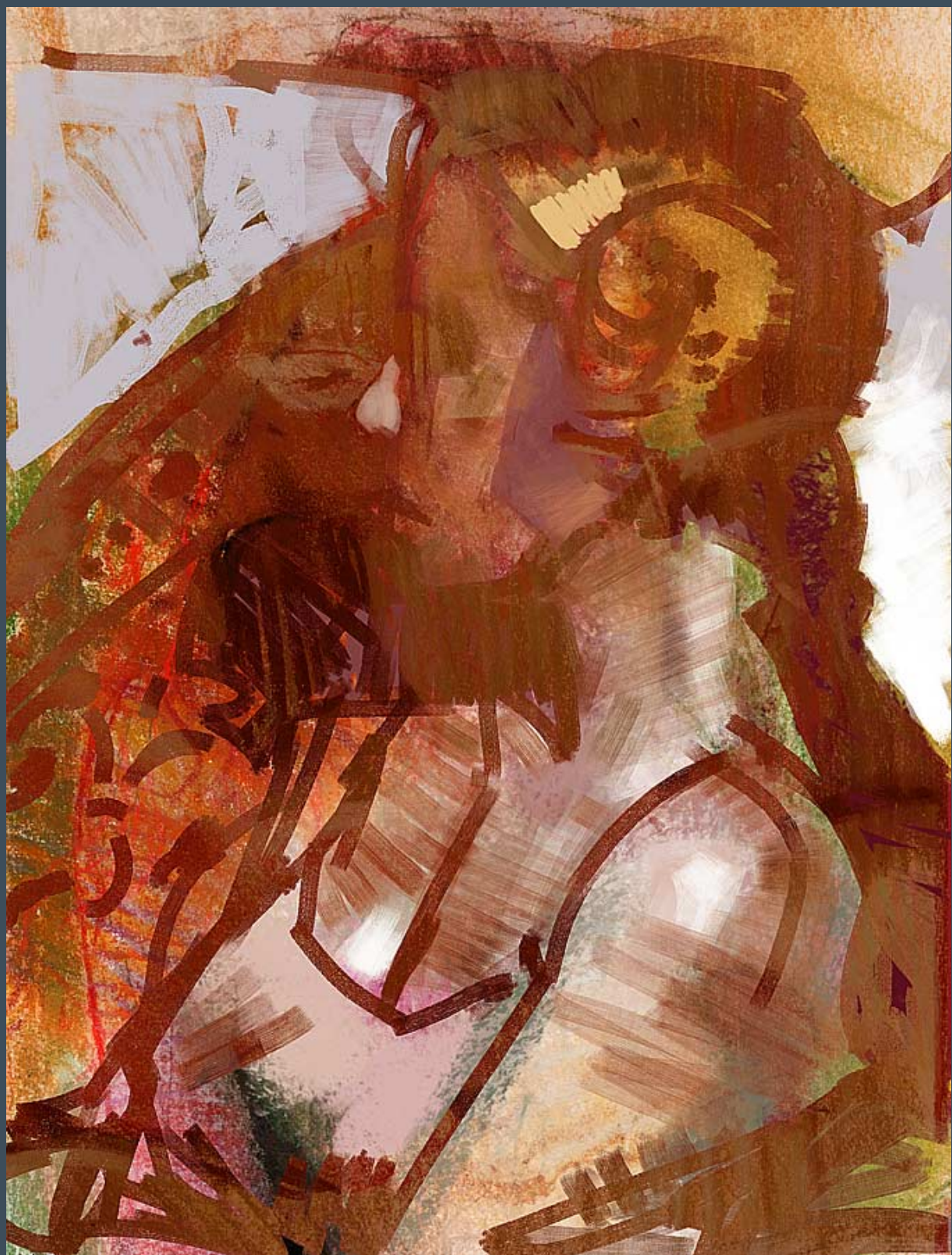
able to conjure.

For that Ayn Rand habit I recommend “With Charity Toward None” by William O’Neill.

I try to use a different process all the time, start tight start loose, on blank, on texture, whatever you can do to juggle things up so maybe you might find something. There is no one way to do anything, and if you reduce it to such, you will have a hard time not repeating yourself over and over. Like I already do, but that is why I try to break things. There will be failures, but pixels are cheap.

But as you are probably figuring out, working within a commercial setting where all parameters are given to you, it can be a little tough controlling your happy accidents so they go in the right direction. Just do a lot of sketches and don’t be too quick to fall in love with any of them. When time runs out, decide.





Hmm, thanks everyone, glad you like it. Once again, I can never figure out what people will like or dislike, which is one of the great things about posting here.

Xia, here is a progress pic, about 20 minutes into it. At the time I was saving flattened versions so I could go back and forth between painter and PS. It was still lying about. Don't know if it answers any questions or not.

My problem with the image is similar to another one I did in a similar style a while ago. The more specific you get, the better the drawing has to be, or the more nit picky, which I hate doing. For instance, the model was about 55-60 years old, and I did pretty much invent her face from scratch, as a challenge. But look at her shoulders, the angle we are looking at them is down considerably. The face is in flat profile. Can this happen? Yes, but do you want to paint a chance occurrence or paint something that reads well and feels solid? That is part of drawing that can be tough and requires that you know anatomy very well. Most artists who know better would not even try it. I could do it looser, but the anatomy of the shoulders is quite specific, and I had the model there so I could even design things a little more. The head, the neck, ugh. I think it is pretty clear that the anatomy of the neck is way too general and looks more like a tube than a neck. Again, I was trying to make up something, the neck of a 20 year old from the neck of a 60 year old. Easy to do really if you are not being finished with things. So that is why I got my ass kicked by what I don't know, as usual.

I remember some illustration students were asking Drew Struzan for some "secrets." He sighed and said OK, take plenty of really good reference, done by a professional photographer, and have all of it professionally printed in 8x10. He would spend a couple of grand on photography for a poster job, and if the ref of the stars was not adequate, he would not take the job. And he would never agree to change the stars expression, lighting, angle etc. I think he would in a sketch, but never a finished poster. And there are few people more technically capable than him. So there you have it, I'm tilting at windmills again.





Cincimino, thanks very much for the overpaint. I appreciate it. I agree that getting rid of the tasteless color dodge is a good call, and yes maybe a little less contrast of the bg could work. I am trying to play the flatness up, sometimes a little too much. It is always a balance trying to stick to something that reads

spatially with proper form and materials and something that could be interesting turned upside down. As you know, I play a lot with that contrast. Also there is a balance between integrating the figure and getting it to stand out. Actually I get into a lot of trouble with that. You paint a figure or character, everyone wants to draw a neon line around it. Not only do I want to lose as many edges as possible, but I want to use the same color and texture and contrast ratios to lose the figure even further. It does not please art directors at all.

If I were to crit this piece, I would say that the head is not handled with the sureness of the BG, and that confidence allows the abstraction and simplification to work. It is a lot easier working from good ref, because you then have the structure and values solved, and you can only worry about the fanciness of the design. But out of my head I am not knowledgeable enough to do this. The random blown out highlights were an intentional thing, as the blown out vest. Ah well, she no work.

And that leads me to another thought about what Mon and I were talking about. It seems that the piece of mine he was talking about is a little different for me because of the way I set up the values and where I chose to show form. Most of the time, I find myself minimizing the lit side of things, flattening things out there, and rendering the form in the shadows. This is not exactly according to Hoyle. The more proper way to do things and Mon's work is a good example of this is to let the shadow fall into low contrast flatness and render the light areas very carefully. Certainly it is what Pyle was talking about. You can see this approach from just about every painter/illustrator out there. Carry form and color and detail in the lit areas and halftone, play tictack toe in the shadows, keep it flat, no contrast.

I am not sure why I do this; I could be an old influence of Sargent creeping back in. He would overexpose highlights and loved to play with soft indirect light. Critics of the time criticized him for it. I think he was influenced by photography in this respect. I guess the core and cast shadow system is a little boring to me, so I try to break it. What an arrogant puss.

I would love to take credit for that, but that is wyeth for you. The design in his paintings is so subtle, almost cartoonish, very simplified and sometimes wildly exaggerated, sometimes amazingly accurate. It is the one thing that set him apart from a lot of imitators. I think this is why I like him better than Pyle, in some cases. More art going on there.

Zhuzhu, Um tips... Uh, textures need variety, (the need for contrast sticking up again) Flat against active, mostly. You can make some parallel with what the true texture on an object is, but in the end, at least with me, it is a design decision, based on the needs of the abstract quality of the image. What I mean by that is the image has to be interesting divorced from the subject, so does it look interesting when turned upside down? Is there enough interest to keep the eye occupied? I use the brushes that come with PS for the most part, I have a brush that is made from the grayscale of a dead tree, but that is about it. The best way to get complexity into things is to work additively and subtractively. Put it on take it off, multiple times. Be awake for interesting things happening. Go with it when it does.

Tomasis, I work with the opacity mapped to pen pressure. Then you can get just what you want at any time. When I painted with a mouse I had my left hand hovering over the keypad to change things quickly. Worked pretty well.

If I could say one thing about the detail thought, that is cool, but be precise about what you DO put down. Not detail. I think there is a confusion about precision and detail they are not the same. Like in music, forte means loud, not faster as well. That is a different thing, but it seems they always do the two together, louder and faster. So for example with your picture of the search light, get the ellipses correct, and make sure the beam is coming correctly out of the cylinder. IS the depth of the searchlight believable? How about the relationship between the wall and the light and support? All these things are communicated through just a few big simple shapes, but they are really important. And don't think I mean you have to use the ellipse tool to make a razor sharp shape, it can be very loose, but correct at the same time. Hard to explain.

zhuzhu, take an old image, rotate it, paint out anything that makes it identifiable and start painting. Or use a photo (not to do an overpaint, of course...) or a scan of a real painting. Real painting? Did I say that? Whatta slip...

Eyewoo, I don't know where the interest comes in assigning value to a work of art based on the tools to make it. I guess I am naive to think that this does not mean something to people, but I guess it does. Maybe you need to create credibility, and then tell people what to think, and they will! So maybe calling attention to the fact that it is digital is a good counterintuitive move.

I think you have a long road ahead, but you are articulate and have a conviction, so push onwards. I am too much of a recluse to do this. I just say oh, people are not interested, OK. I do something else. If I did not have to earn a living, I might not even paint on a computer at all, so much for my passion!

I thought of a good way to explain to people who, when you say you paint on the computer get that dismissive look in their eye like you are a grave digger or something. Some people balance their checkbook on the computer, some on paper. Same result, better tool. I take it upon myself not to use the better tool to make it easier to get fat and lazy, but to push onwards, blahblah blah.

I am always amazed that concept art is commissioned. The stuff I did actually did influence the game, but what I did was kind of obvious to me. Street, reflections, dark, sprinkle lights. But the people I do them for really seem to think they are useful, so I take them at that.

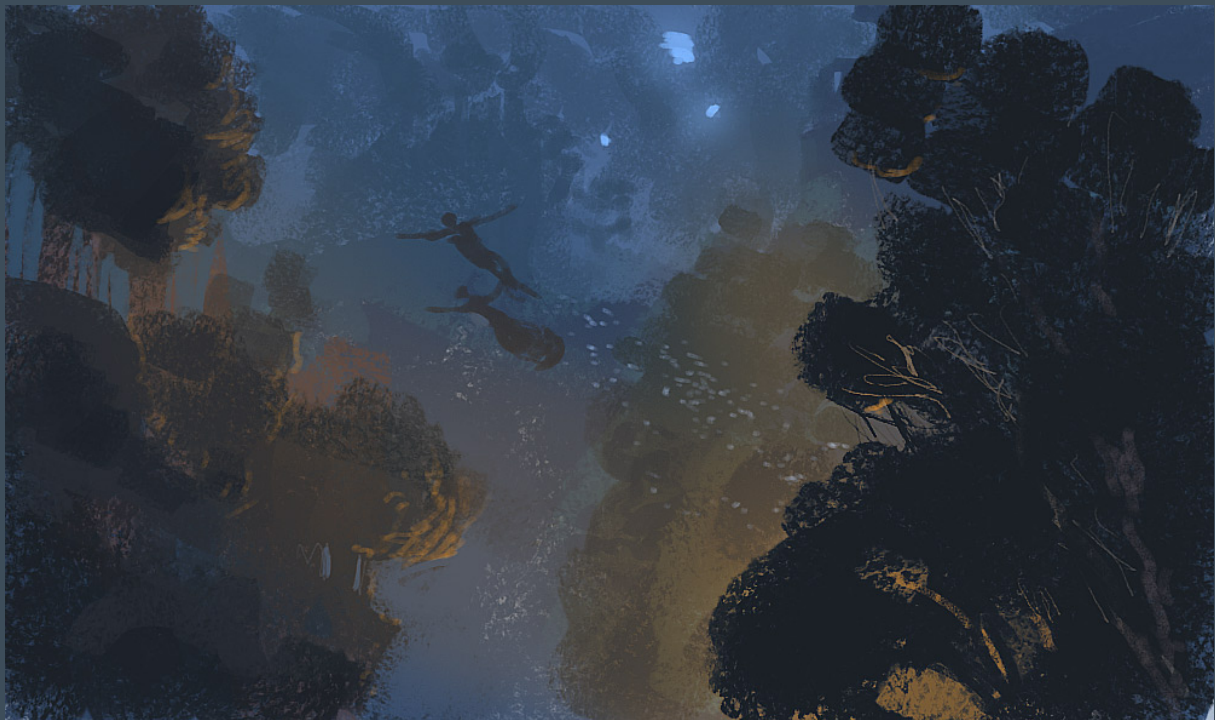
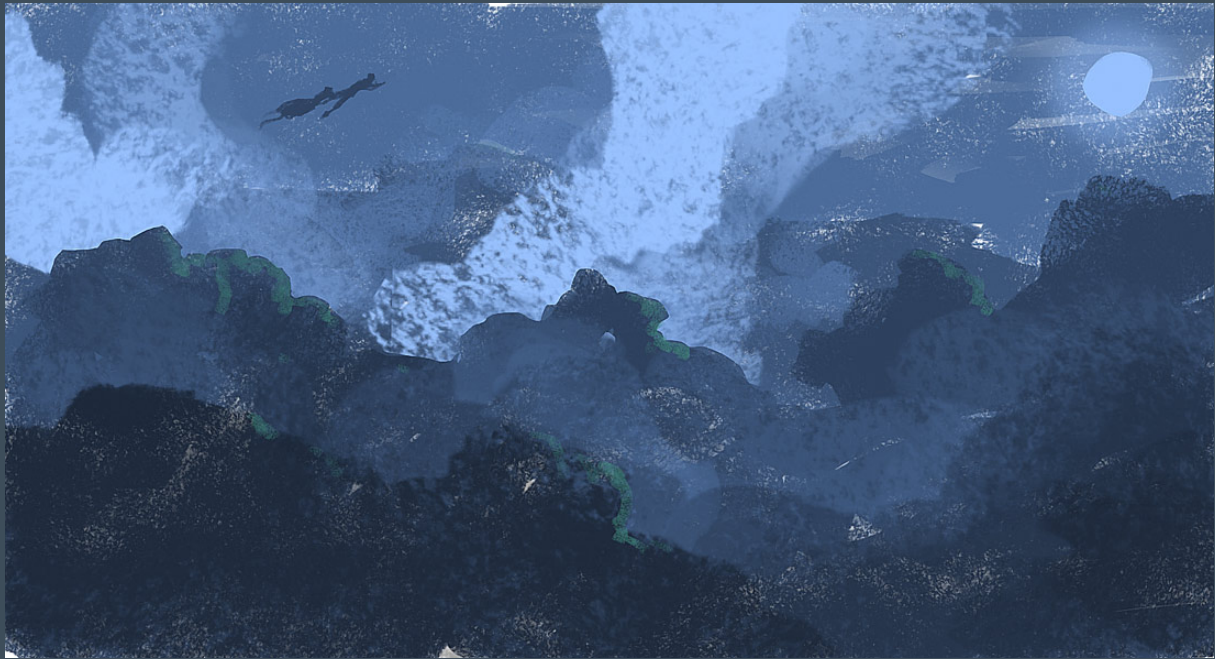
I did fire up the demo and it is a pretty neat game, and it looks cool. I am enjoying playing it! Don't know if I will spring for 50 bucks, but it would be fun.

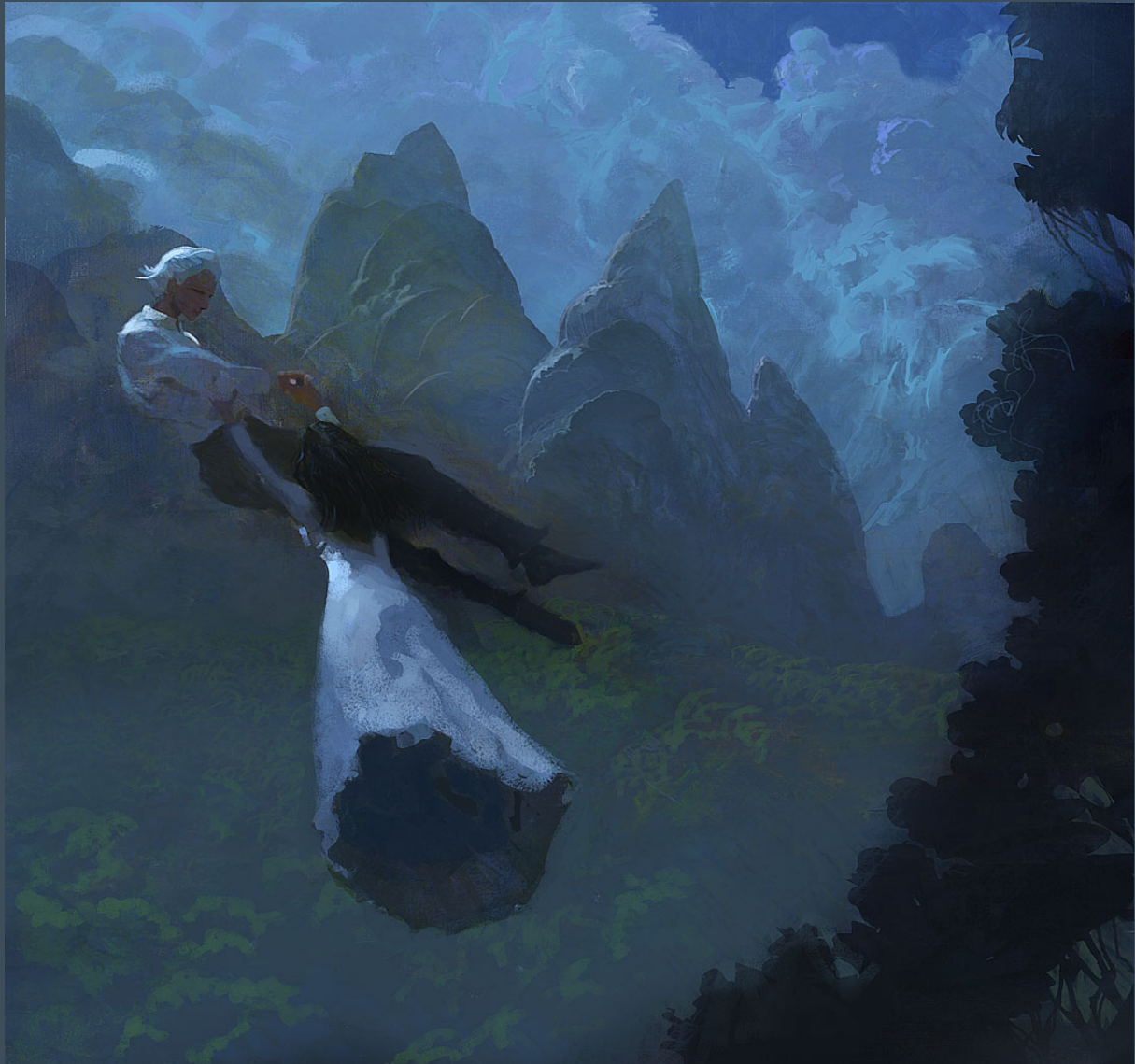
to me speed painting is any painting that does not have work done to it to disguise the fact that there are parts you don't understand. The old illustration standard was you could make the most awful tripe in the world, and if it was "tight and clean" it was OK. If you can successfully simplify something, you

understand it. If you don't, you will wiggle it, smudge it, put some more highlights and contrast on it, dodge it, render it more, blah blah.

Or maybe it is work finished until more work would bleed the life out of it, as you have to do in illustration work.

more peter pan stuff I was fired after I turned these in





I am not sure fired is the correct term, it is never a good idea to “fire” anyone. Pick another euphemism. But they chose not to renew my contract. But to be fair, I had not a clue of what they were after. I could not make heads or tails of the direction I was given. So I made it “magical and blue”-- always a safe bet. Don’t know what they finally did. I know the moon must be in there somewhere, just has to be. It will be huge and full and blue. Could someone go see it to find out?

Tiger1313, I have been working for about 15 years professionally. I did not really get serious about getting better until a few years ago. I was too busy playing golf and watching TV. That mountain you are at the base of? It just gets bigger the more you climb, so don’t think about it, you will get discouraged,

just enjoy the ride. You will get further in the long run

Styles, cut em off! It will work, I promise. Less time skirt chasin, more time painting!

Digital decoy, no I was not thinking of your orc at all when I wrote that. I was just thinking of my own tendencies. But, I can see you point that that image does seem to suffer from it. I would have spent more time designing and drawing things and less time on highlights, so yeah, I guess that is the sickness. I could take it a step further and say that even before you worry about values the drawing is most important. This is my greatest struggle, as I am not a natural draw type person. And by drawing I do not mean working with lines! I mean gesture, structure, perspective, design. All the garbage that I do here are my attempts at getting better at this.

For instance, the torso of mister Orc is half lying down and half at a 45 degree angle to vertical. The midsection is almost flat and the ribcage is tilted up a little. Sit that way yourself, hold your head upright and you will see that your chin rests on your sternum. So in your pic the head feels a little high, a little sticking out. And to emphasize the gesture, err on the side of shorter, because that reinforces the weight of the beast sitting in the chair.

Ok overpaint,



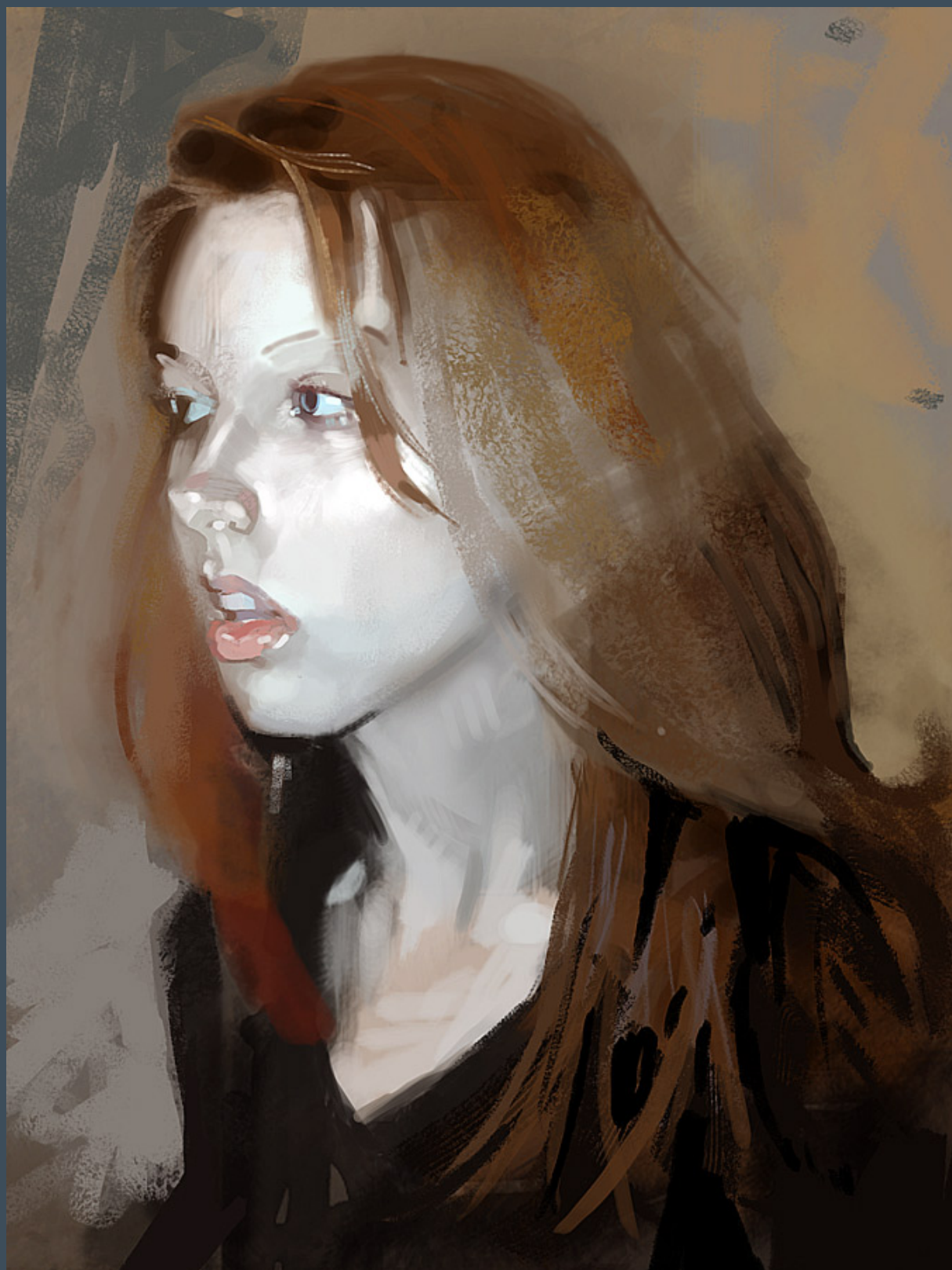
Don't know if this is any better, but you could mess around with something at this stage longer. But at some point you come up against something that is beyond your knowledge, happens to me all the time, I just cannot visualize something cause I don't understand what is going on structurally. Off to life class for another thousand hours. This is why working from photos will not get you anywhere, you sit there like a trained monkey copying shapes. And a strange thing happens when you get better at drawing, your design improves as well.

My thought is to look at the bigger shapes of the head, and play with edges more. There is a hierarchy of edges as well as values. I know if you look at the photo, you see hard edges everywhere, so you have to kind of "remap" that in your head, looking for the softest edge in the photo, and paint that as really lost. Look for the next hardest edge and make that a little more firm, and so on. Leave the hardest edges for last, after your biggest shapes are already working OK.

I really lost the edge of the hair and face to make a point about how soft you can go. Also hair is a soft material, and you can generally make it softer than it might appear.

But i think you are seeing too much a head, and not enough of submitting to just what you see. I know I yammer about structure and drawing all the time, but you have to go back and forth between what the structure is and what the resultant shapes Really are. And then to simplify. I painted only the top, front and side planes of the nose, ignoring all the fascinating little changes in local value that are there. So in that case I simplified based on form, not just the shapes that I saw. I know it is confusing, and you just have to do it a lot to know where to paint the simplified form, and where to follow just the 2-d shapes and values and edges that you see.

The only guide I can give is to ask what form is denoted by each change in value. Is it an important form that you want to show or ignore? This begins with really big stuff like the turn of the cylinder of the head away from the light, the brow turned more away from the light than the cheek, etc. Start with the bigger forms and you will be surprised how quickly it can come together if you analysis is right.



I really don't know what good drawing is, I cannot define it absolutely. Traditionally, it is an academic idea, and the guys at art renewal would say that naturalism is good drawing. But there are people who have expanded the definition of what is good drawing. Take for instance Elliot's girl at the top of this page. It is excellent! Everyone seems to like it. All those French dudes draw like a fish swims. But the proportions are funny and the arm is too short and the head is strange and the hip is missing, etc. So in the eyes of an academic purist this is bad drawing. So I would say that drawing is as subjective as any aspect of art, and has more to do with the emotional expression of form. If it looks wrong to you, it is wrong... to you. There is an old painting I did of a gladiator crouching. I was very happy with the gesture of it. But so many people says it looks messed up to them. So who is right? If you go with the expanded idea of what drawing can be, to include more expressive ideas, it becomes very subjective.

But the art renewal people and dim witted people in general, think they know what good drawing/art is. Even by their own definitions, some of the "living masters" in their "approved" gallery don't know much, and it is pretty embarrassing in my eyes. I have watched them work first hand and listened to their narrations. I cannot prove that it is "bad," because I do believe in my own conviction about how subjective things are. I can only say that I get cross-eyed looking at some of them. And if academic skill is the only thing you are selling, it is grim.

So as far as worrying about anatomy in these speed things, that is an involved question. But to make it simpler, if there is something that bothers the viewer, it is wrong to them. Others could like it. But usually these images are thoughts that have one or two goals in mind, like lighting or composition or even anatomy (maybe pay more attention then). I guess the shortest answer I could give is spending enough thought so that it does not stick out painfully.

Flushy, I am going to say something pretty harsh, so the rest of you go away for a minute 🤪 I am roughly 15 years older than you, and I see a lot of the same strengths and weaknesses in your work and mine. You and I have a good handle on setting up a solid value structure and then playing with paint and light effects to keep the eye entertained. But you, like me, need more drawing. I just started about 3-4 years ago.. Don't make the same mistakes I made, hiding behind piles of pretty paint, start now and learn more about drawing. Any painterly illustrative style depends on this more than anything. Your work will be better, faster, more flexible, and more profitable. You will learn faster as

time goes on and the emergence of your own artistic personality will be much stronger. I had a teacher at AC that said plainly that in all the students he had seen, income was based on the ability to draw more than any other factor.

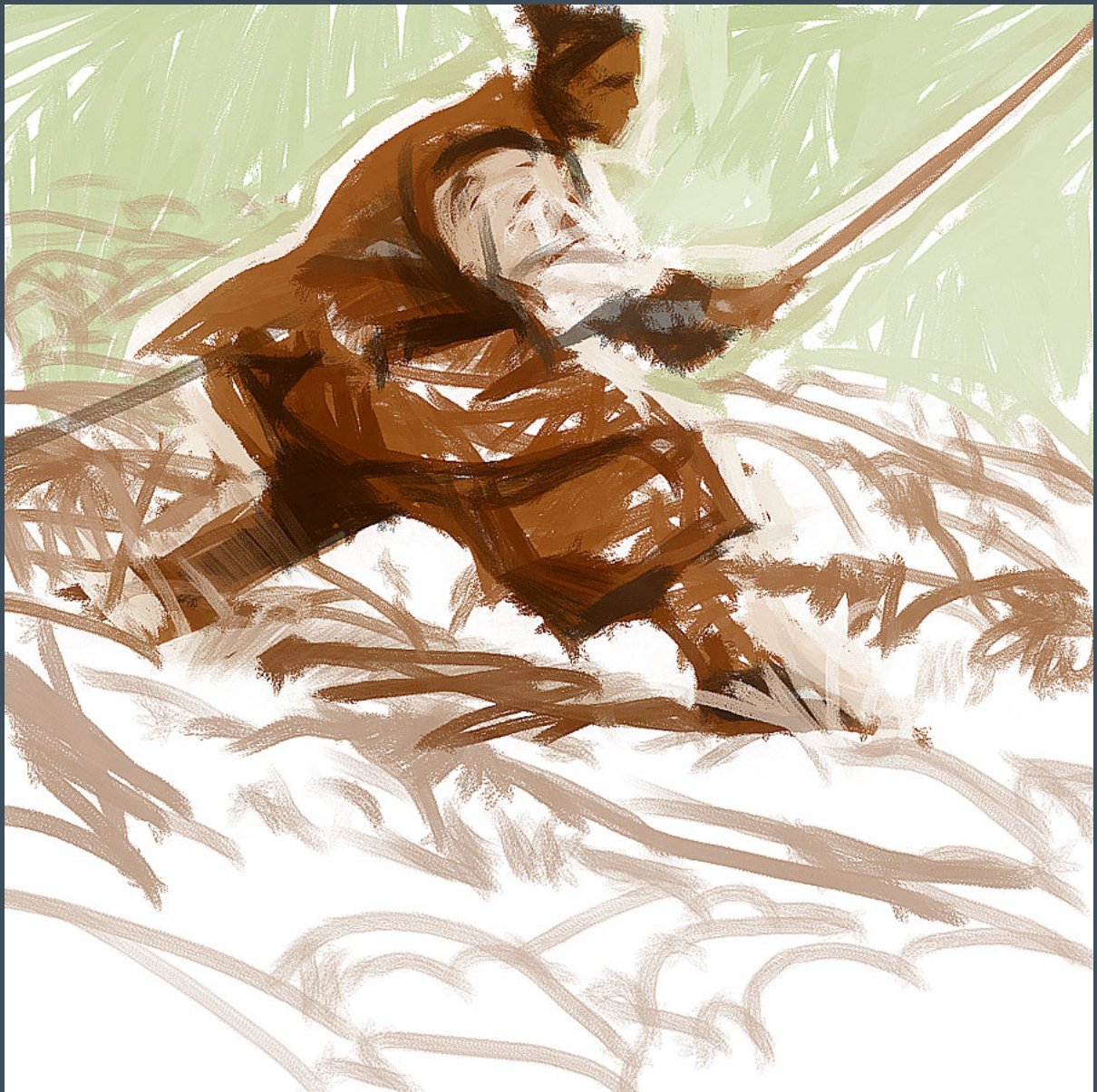
But you protest “you just said you did not know what drawing is!” That’s right I don’t, but I think that it has something to do with your own personal understanding the form and structure of the things around us, and figuring out how to express that on a 2-d surface. And to further explain my obnoxious comments about academic artists above, be very very careful of whom you listen to, and that includes me. I have seen way too many young artists get caught in the academic thing and never emerge. I can see them sitting before the feet of the robed master, as he tells tales of the greatness that they should all strive for, to immolate themselves on the pyre of 19th century masters, there is only one true path and all else lead to the dark side. So try to find people you can learn from, but a variety, not one (or one institution) who claims to Know, and says if you don’t listen you are Damned.

I went to ACCD and took some classes at Art Institute of California. Both are wonderful in their own way, both take themselves way too seriously. But that could be for marketing purposes. Nobody likes a wishy washy. “Pay us 100 grand and we will give you a fragmented idea of what we think art might be partially about” Not very good. Lets just say they have started to believe their own PR.

I don’t think this will happen to you, you are a little older, and maybe have a stronger personality and could tell them to shove it.

If you find yourself on your own, go to museums often, carry a sketchbook at all times (and even draw in it) and draw from life as much as you can. Learn about art history too. Draw and think while you are drawing. Spending 2 hours filling a background behind a head drawing with a 4H pencil is not the best use of time. I said all this before.

Ok if I slobber this much I have to post something.



Mikko k, as you work as an illustrator over a number of years, you accumulate an collection of approaches and tools to help you give birth to an image. And giving birth is about right, or making sausages. The sweating and grunting and plain ugliness is hopefully hidden in the final image. I really do struggle with things sometimes, and it is usually the drawing, the structure of things seen in a strange perspective, an action or gesture that has to be captured just so and is very fleeting. I don't have to struggle with the values, I know how to do that, for some reason.

I see people here that draw, like I said, like they breathe. Makes me envious, because I know that that the drawing is the more rare and useful and hard fought skill. They might say “but I wish I had the feeling for values...” I would trade them, but maybe that is just the grass being greener. Better to keep what you have and work on what you don’t, which is what I am trying to do.

from the Peter Pan stuff. Go wolves, go!



eh one more while I am standing here

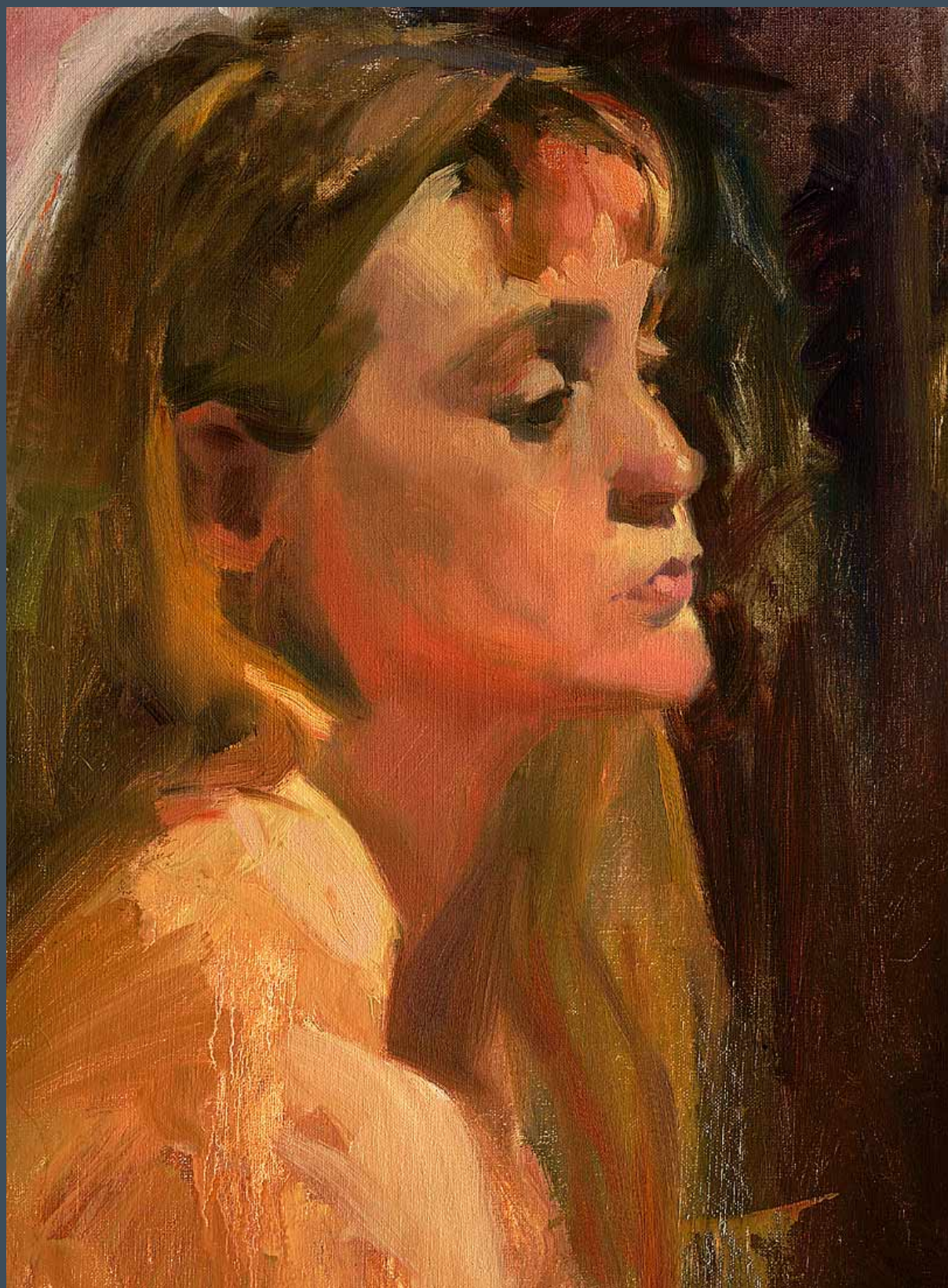


Andyt, well I guess. But I have worked long enough to know when I understand something, it will be fine and I can do it quickly. In Enaylas pic I saw the upper planes of the head making that lovely shadow shape and it painted itself, about 20 minutes work. But sometimes I think or look at something and I know that I am in for an evening of avoiding the wacom, playing a game, sweaty palms, doing another speedpainting (of something I know!) etc. I know I don't understand it, and nothing is going to help that. Sometimes, if I am lucky, I will figure it out. But that is work.

Thanks Popeye, I am responsible for you blowing 4 years and 100 grand? The mind boggles. Well, you have no idea how far ahead you are of the typical beginning student. But don't slack off, I saw others use the same advantage to sort of breeze through things, and in the end, they did not learn much. Use a scrotum clamp at all times cranked up to 2000 PSI.

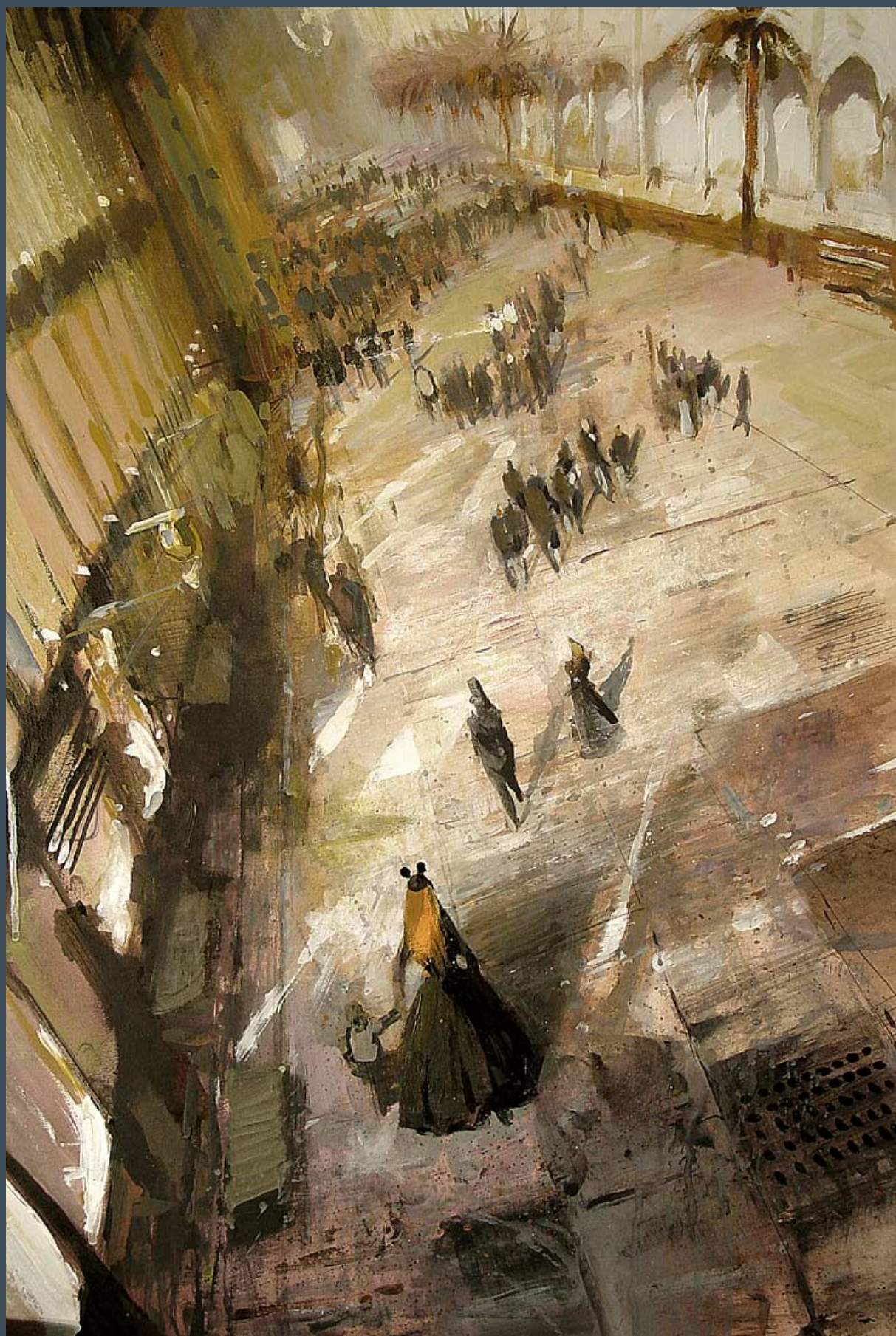
And you know I would rather have good gesture than good structure any day. Sometimes I think that the structure is simply the facilitator of the action, not an end in itself at all.

More pathetic oils. I can't control this stuff. I know what I want it to do, but the variables of surface, paint, brush etc. make it so I can't get the edge and activity that I want at all. If you can't control it, you can't draw with it either. Sigh



What make it tougher is a car is part matte, part reflective, so it gets confusing if you don't understand both qualities well. Also, car forms are a little like the figure. The viewer is so accustomed to seeing those volumes that the drawing has to be Good. Nobody knows what an orc looks like. So figure out the forms first, then light it with matte finish, then maybe make it shiny. Or do it all at once after doing it several thousand times. (You are comparing yourself to car designers drawings, and they have done probably hundreds of thousands of them)

This is an acrylic painting (20*30") of an old speed paint I did. I copied this because I just wanted to worry about size and the paint itself. The idea is if I can paint big and do it quickly(~3hrs), there is a business in selling in galleries maybe. I just don't like the look of digital prints at all. Well, there are probably 100 holes in this idea, but it was fun to do.



reject from halo2 work.



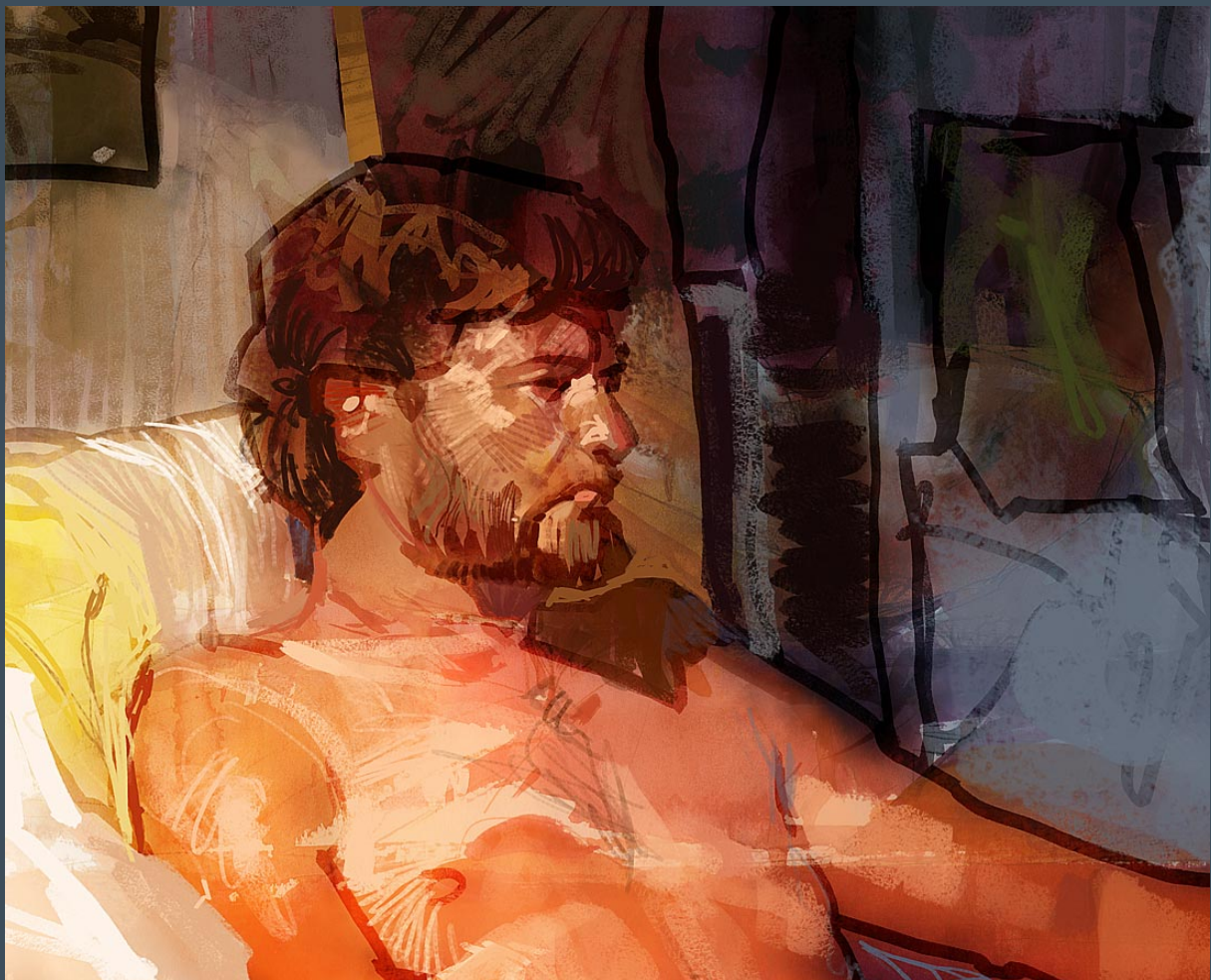
I remember when I first started posting images that were "less finished" people objected that I was throwing crap at them. I am not sure that there is anything inherently good about an abstracted image, but what I am after is simplification. One reason for this is laziness, what can I get away with? What can I leave out and still tell the story? One part of simplification that is often overlooked is when you leave stuff out, what remains by default becomes more important. The remaining aspects of a loose image must be precisely done, because so much is riding on it. So simplification is not just simplifying, or rather it is more correctly finding out what is really important. By leaving out what is not needed, and playing up what is important, the image becomes stronger, has more impact, it hits the viewers mind with a little more force as they say "yes, that is what I see when I look at that." And since each artists idea of what is important is a little different, the art becomes more personal and expressive. Duplicating photos is a fun parlor game for a while(I did my share), but what do you do after doing that for a while (years?) You start to pick and choose what and how you paint.

It's funny that you think the halo image is over the edge, because it looks very realistic to me if you get back from it a bit. But you are right, I like the tension between the images life as a 2-d collection of textures and shapes and it's

suggestion of form. Probably that is my obsession.

I think the image was rejected because of the size and importance of the halo 2 project. The images for that campaign need to be very conservative. That is the unfortunate by product of success, you work on bigger projects and you don't have as much freedom. It was just a sketch, I would have tricked it out as a finished product, but yes, I would get a big stiffy if they used it as is. Not ever gonna happen. But the need for speed images were done fast, no revisions. But they were for internal use, and that is a different world. I am trying to find a way to combine the approaches, to find a way of painting that most people would accept as "finished," but the image still has some life and ambiguity to it. That is hard to do.

from life, actually took a while, well, I was very careful with the drawing, so the painting went really fast. Funny how that happens.





spoogedemon, a question here : you often have that noisy-textured-layer, know the one i mean ? is it on top or underneath ? i mean do you build up your pic using the patterns or just add it as an atmospheric layer at the end ?

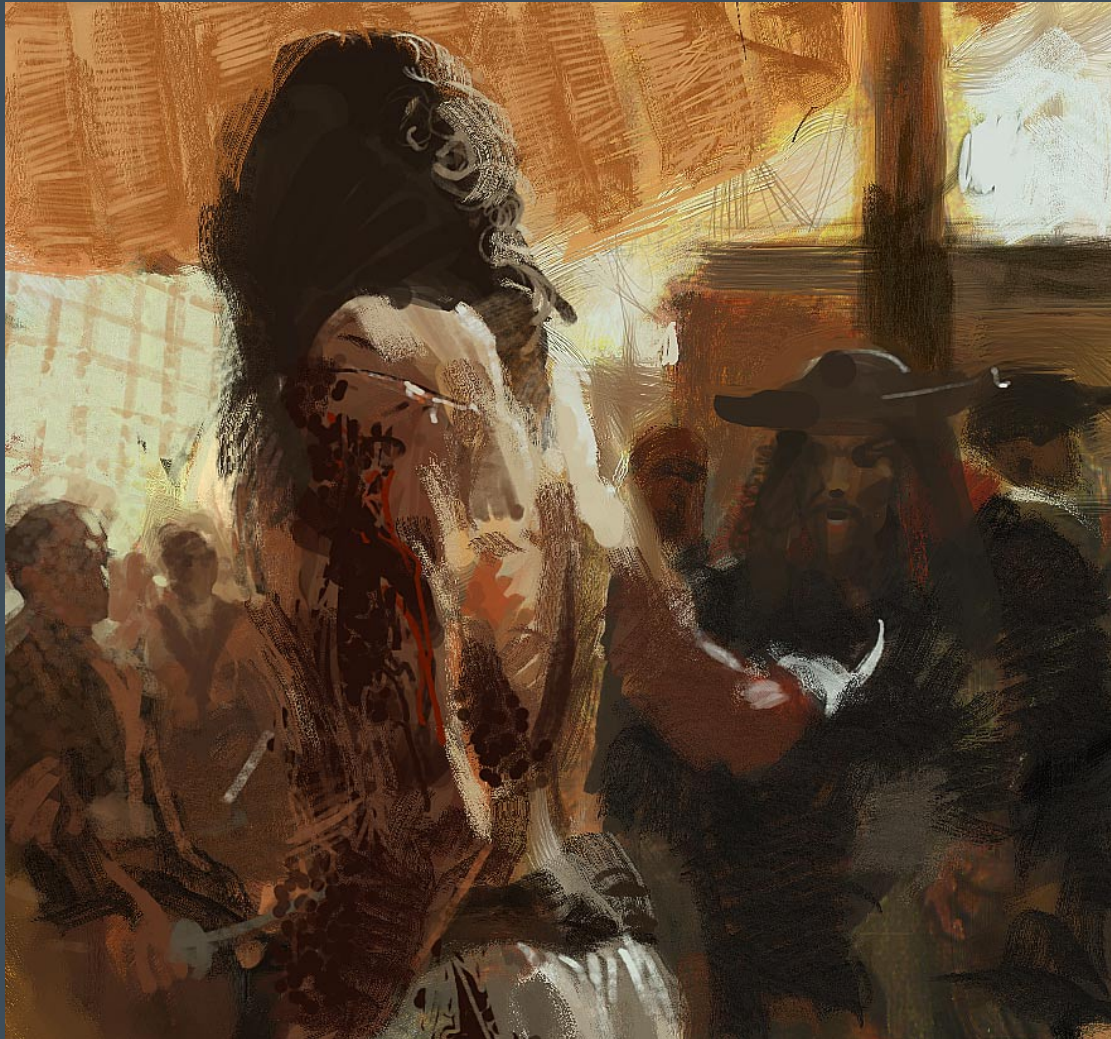
Pixx, the secret is to never ever use one way. It might look like I do things one way, but that is because of my tiny reptilian brain always see things the same way and steers it that way. Always changing how I do things is an attempt to break the stranglehold my brain has on my brain. YOU know all this stuff. But to answer your question more specifically, I usually start with an old painting, a watercolor in that case, start painting on a layer over the top of that, and then modify the wc layer where it has unfortunate value shifts. Or sometimes I will overlay it on top, but I don't like to do that much as it is not as flexible. Sorta like a wash or scumble with real paint, but not as flexible. YOU could modify it though...

well thanks for the support *sniff* Seriously, they can do what they want, and I always work to the highest standard I can given the circumstances. Many times there are so many other considerations than what I would consider strictly artistic. Sometimes these considerations are very legitimate and smart, other times it is... not. On rare occasions it is the taste of the art director, but that is rarer than you would think. Most of the time it is a conservative decision to make it "look like the other stuff out there that we know works." It is a business after all, and those making the decisions have to account for them later if things go wrong. Thusly we have movie blue, always and forever. If you were an art director would you do something you thought was arty and screw up a 150 million dollar picture? Your career would be over. Really any large enterprise can suffer from this problem.

And as my career has moved along, I am working for higher end projects now, and the pressure is up. The image has to "say it all", and get through many layers of neurotic (for the reasons stated above) bureaucracy. It takes a long time and the end result is usually, artistically, to my eye, hideous. Also there are people in the corporation who are there because of their ambition, rather than their competence, and that makes for some really cynical decisions. Or there might be people involved in things that have little to do with artistic concerns namely marketing or business people. And it is not a given that

something original or creative will give you the highest chance of selling something. So keep this in mind when working in the field, the clients did not wake up this morning aching to piss on your art, they want to sell stuff.

paint to post, yes



I would not place much on those kind of rules. Learn them so you can break them. Draw that horizon right down the middle! Ever seen the academics that draw all kinds of circles and swirls and magic squares all over a master painting? Follow it closely sometime, you will see it makes no sense at all, or, you can do the same with a Kincade (not to pick on him, but he's a good example of a non-master) or a picture of road kill. The academic tends to make things very complex and impenetrable for the sake of their intellectual stature and future employment. Too bad, because it makes real insight a more difficult thing to see.

I think what is bothering you about that image is the break of value across the

BG behind the gun barrel. Flattens things out when you have unfortunate alignments like that.

Mad martigan, If I use ref like I think you are meaning, it is pretty obvious, like the Clint eastwood thing. But I use ref all the time, but not to paint from, but more from informational purposes. I am working right now on some Cossacks riding through a forest. I have no idea what those uniforms look like. So I go get a lot of ref. But not to copy shapes or interpret shapes as an illustrator would. Hope that answers your question.

As far as what goes on in my head, not much. Sometimes on purpose! I have said before that I like to change the process around as much as I can, to try to see where something might lead. What I want to break free from is the "proper" way of doing things (thumbnails, line art, value study, tone ground, darks first, lights, etc). Spending the rest of my career refining and narrowing these steps seems kind of boring to me. Even though an artists work all looks the same (you can tell who did it) changing process can be a way of staving off terminal repetition. Or at least I am trying. So I think what you are doing with starting differently sounds good to me.

So to answer your question, sometimes I have something very specific in mind that came to me while brushing my teeth. Sometimes an abstract doodle will jump out at me. All over the map.

Ron, the pirate stuff and the mouse ears things are all invented no reference. I think doing a lot of matte painting has helped me a lot with that. You have to be extremely thorough in your understanding of the lighting situation, and sometimes having plate photography to reverse engineer can really help you understand what is going on. Why every plane is the value it is, why every color is the way it is. You have to have that surety to pull off a matte. So when you have that base to pull from, you can start exaggerating in doing illustrations, since you know what is real, and can always pull back if needed. Also looking at

photography really closely helps to understand it's limitations and characteristics, generally to avoid them, but you know about that from all the studio time you have.

Um your second question, that is a real battle. I can't stand noodling images, once I have solved it composition and lighting (getting it to a "speedpainting" level) I feel the image gets weaker and loses impact with more noodling. I am always up for rethinking the whole problem from the ground up, but no turd polishing, please. But a lot of art directors squeal about it, and worry about getting fired. One thing you can do is not show any picky work in the portfolio, so everyone has the same expectations. Yes I think that is the answer, you might not get the same jobs, but the work will appeal to a different set.

Someone asked if matte painting would be a good academic exercise in itself. Yes! But again, careful of what you let into your head. The appearance of things might not be the best way for you. I guess the best of all worlds is to be able to learn something and then be able to use it or not to varying degrees.

This is a speed painting that I got paid for! This was my goal in starting to do these things so long ago. This is for a movie called Runelords, starting to shoot this summer.



don't worry about texture stuff. Work on the basics more. Actually the more you play with texture the stronger and more well designed and thought out your shapes have to be in order for them to remain readable. You probably think "but yours sucks!", that may be true, but hopefully it is good enough to get the point across. Better drawing makes better images, and anything else is just icing. Don't be pulled in by surface tricks. I could probably use a little of that advice, but I love to break things to see how they work.

I have been painting a character that is very fat recently, and it is a fun thing to do, as it can help you with your understanding of the skeleton. No matter how much fat is on a person, many of the attachment points of muscles to the skeleton are on the surface, like the butt dimples and such. They are really important landmarks to find, and they are always there if you look.

What also interests me about a person with a lot of fat is the skeleton is not fat. There is a normal skeleton under there (well, it depends on when in life the weight was put on, etc.) And the ironic thing is that the more fat there is, the more the weight of the tissue pulls on the skin and on these attachment points and you can get a feel of the normal skeleton beneath. But the elasticity and strength of the skin have a lot to do with this, a younger fat person has thick, very elastic flesh that can hide a lot of this.

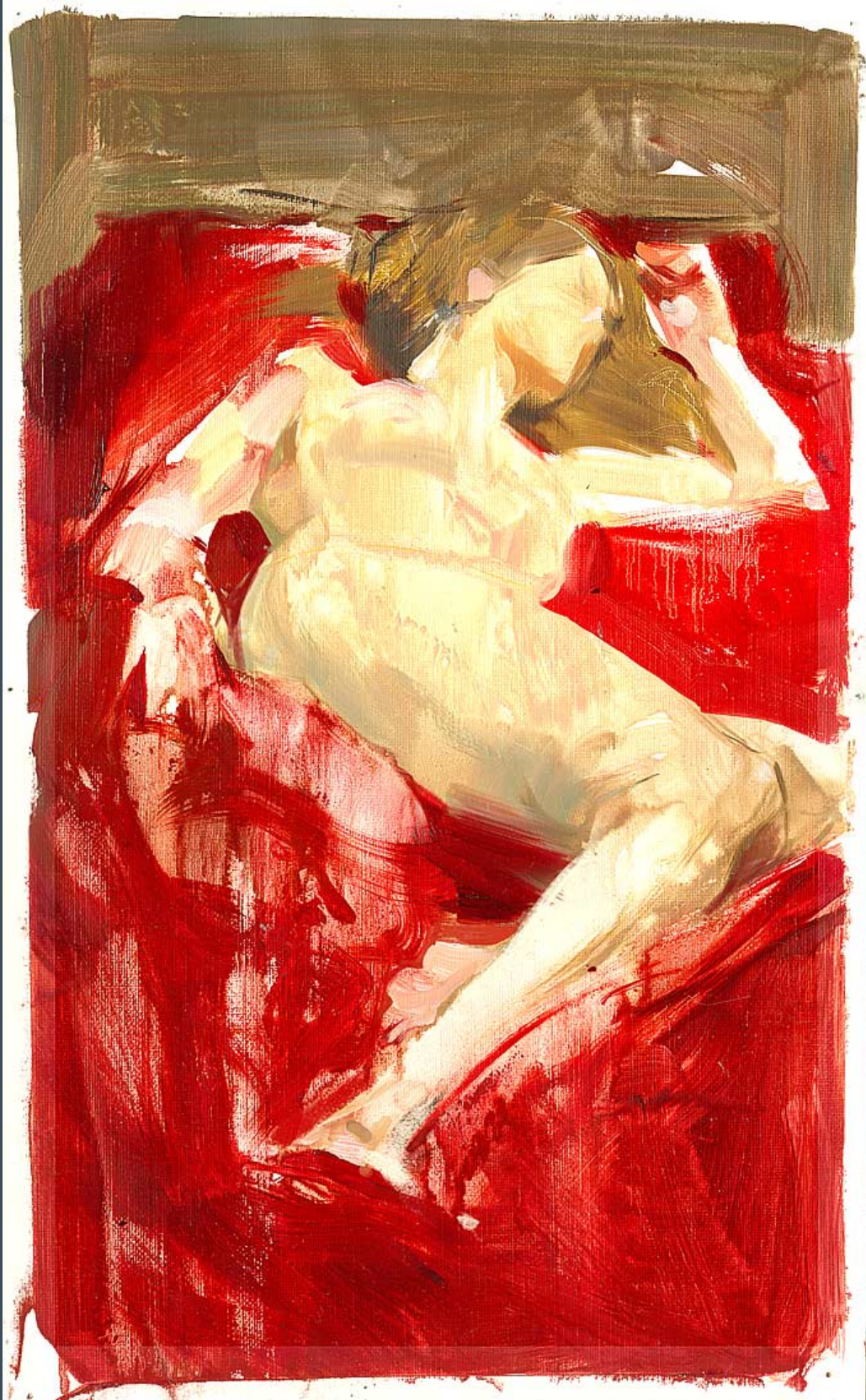


I was looking at waterhouse pretty closely here, I like his stuff. His color, and I see other artists like this, looks just like color overlays in digital. I know this image looks like I overlaid a layer of orange, but it is straight paint. Very interesting. Of what I have seen of Steve Huston's boxers they has the same quality.

Anyway, the drawing was a 20 minute life charcoal sketch on rough paper that I worked over. It is pretty much left alone in the face.

hehe pudding, thanks. When I look at your work I get the feeling that I ma looking at fine art, not illustration. Maybe some of it is the real thrashing with small tools that gives the surface an obsessive quality, like you sat there for several hours grinding away. Don't get me wrong, I REALLY like it and think it is fresh. Concept illustrators (myself too) are so often into the effortless artist thing that they don't know brands them as "ILLUSTRATOR" forever and ever. So please don't lose that quality when you go about the process of "improving" I think you just need to be a little more precise with structure (like me too) and you be there.

I am happy with this painting, although most people stare at me in disbelief. Maybe not so much the painting, but I can see where it might go and I am happy with the harmony of the paint use and shapes used.



when I started in illustration I had no idea. I did not do well at art center, I was not really advanced enough to take advantage of what was offered me there. Since then I have figured out what they all were talking about, mostly. And the market for what I do now did not exist back then, and what I was trained for now does not exist either. So I don't know what conclusions you can draw from this, but learning to draw as well as you can is probably a good foundation that is as flexible as you can hope for.

HPX, I think I like the variety of edges and marks and the simplicity with which it was done. Strong, clear simple, with good interest in the paint usage. BTW I think your mech painting needs more color and value in the halftones, less black and contrasty stuff near where the light is hitting it. Just a thought, worth what you paid for it.

I agree with what Duracel said, but careful of looking at Charest too much. Might get the wrong conclusion out of it with such high finish. Sometimes he gets the most basics stuff a little messed up too, like we all do. I think it would be better to look at a wide variety of artists with strong drawing skills, esp animators and even the pencils of good comic artists. But even better are old master drawings. Duracel, I know you were just giving one example, but I thought I would add this thought.
OK paint to post.



The reason you are going to open a vein is the drawing. It has nothing to do with whether you are using line, a pencil, charcoal, paint, wacom, etc. Drawing is structure, and that is what is missing. You cannot paint if you can't draw.

On the one you just did the eye sockets are too large and they do not extend across the skull as you have them. The shape of the hair implies where the ear sits, and it is too high. The back of the skull is missing, or the facial features are too large on the skull, a common problem.

All of this is drawing, yet there are no lines involved. So please reconsider thinking about drawing. No pencils or lines required.

Oh sweet jesus, the bottomobarrell here



I would suggest starting from a middle value and working your way from there. Wait until you really need to use lights or darks. If your middles are well thought out, you don't often need them. Read the sargent notes on my site again. He talks about "classifying" values. Each plane has its own value, and has to be kept in relation to other planes. Keep in mind when things are going wrong, and you feel tempted to pull out the white and black, that there is only one darkest dark and only one brightest light. Find those, as well as the middle and now you have three points from which to start classifying the values of the planes. When you are looking at the model, it is easier to see the differences. But when you are painting out of your head, you have to understand why each of those planes might have a different value. Then you can construct some kind of rationale for breaking things up. But keep in mind, try to say the most with the middle values, hold back on the extremes.

But the biggest problem I see is too much activity or contrast in shadows. It's dark in there! Not much going on. Color and detail live in the halftones, or what is in light but not the brightest area. So relatively speaking, keep shadow information subordinate to what is in light.

I think these two things will help with "unity"

(Also learn value on basic forms, point sources versus diffuse or ambient, etc.)

One thing I remember about good matte painters is they love "the shot" more than painting. Painting was a means to an end. They would do what the shot requires.

So if you love art and drawing and painting, focus on that. It will allow you to be more varied and learn more about art in general than being a matte artist. This is especially true today, and will be truer in the future.

And what Henrik says is true, learn how and why things are the way they are, it will help you regardless of what you go into.

Matte painters have a reputation for being strange people, and often it is true. I am sure a lot of people have this opinion of me. But it is too bad that a matte painter's introspective nature gets in the way of them contributing to the project on a larger scale. They are too geeky to compete for power in the business. Artists are like this in general, which is why galleries have their way with them so often.

Painting something realistically makes you understand something very well. This knowledge is not taken advantage of often enough by VFX supes in general. This frustration led to the old guard at ILM to set up their own shop because they did not like a former camera operator (promoted to supervisor) telling them what clouds look like. 😄😄😄 or so the legend goes...

I have been working with the same agent for the past 13 years and it has worked out very well. Of all the people I have met in my trajectory through Sodom and Gomorrah (LA) she is the one I can trust completely.

There is a problem with using more than one agent. You have only so much time and having a number of agents beating the bushes without some kind of idea that you will be available is not fair to the agents. Scheduling with tricky jobs gets tricky.

Some jobs are very complex and usage and copyright and all that is difficult to get through. Often times you are negotiating with lawyers who will eat you alive. They will obfuscate and waste your time until you cave in. The jobs I do have contracts running many many pages. I am not competent to evaluate this. A lawyer could, but that would be the only service they would provide.

Having a rep who understands contracts and knows the market is better than a lawyer. It is a complicated thing to keep up with the market, and the artist working in the studio does not have the exposure to do this.

My agent is a negotiator, and deals with bureaucrats very well (unlike me). Remember the bureaucrat exists to secure their job, and it is in their interests to make the deal complex and protective of their company. If the deal is with production people, sometimes it does not go as well.

Also it is important to have an agent who is not greedy and wants to bleed every last dime out of every deal. This is shortsighted and cuts both of your throats. Again, know the market. If you come in low or high it is very bad for your reputation.

Be very careful of references. To me they are worthless for stuff that really matters. If people work together and it does not go well, there is a point at which the two almost nonverbally agree to “not say anything bad” about the other. It’s quid pro quo. I have seen this happen many times in the movie business and in other areas of life as well. And a lot of people don’t like giving

recommends at all because of the implied responsibility.

Stay away from companies that take your work and repackage it. Like FF or something. Not a good deal at all.

I worked with an agent right out of school, and she helped me get started. I recently had to stop working with her. She had not kept up with the industries I work in and could not give accurate bids, and the more complicated contracts were beyond her experience. Also, I would not hear from her for an extended period, I would have a booked year with my other agent and she would be understandably upset that I could not take the job. So I am just working with one right now.

I will be looking into getting an agent to work with galleries in the near future.

But to expand a little on the problem, if an agent comes to you with a job and asks how much you want, and proceeds to charge that client double that, say no. It has happened to me. Usually they will refuse to document how much the client was charged, saying you were paid what you asked and the rest is none of your business. It is your business.

Unless it is "work for hire" If you paint Mickey Mouse for Disney, it is a copyrighted character already, so you can't make prints and sell them without the MOST DIRE CONSEQUENCES. You had better fake your own death if you make this mistake.

There is no governing body making up rules of conduct. The graphic artists guild makes suggestions, describes market conditions, but that's about it. It is all what you can negotiate. Syd Mead kept his original art, or the deal was off. At the time, nobody else in the biz had the leverage to do this. But it was important to him, so he cashed in some his other points to get it.

On the reuse thing, someone pays you for the work, then resells it to a third party, without you knowing what it was sold for. Sometimes the come on is "I pay you and I take the risk that the client will not pay." This is hardly ever the case, and you won't see dime one if it does happen. The usual deal is I do an architectural bird's eye for \$5000. Mr. Rep sells it to the architect for \$30,000. He pockets the difference. You can see there might be a mismatch between

your and the client's perception of the amount of work and expertise in the image. So not only are you getting screwed, but you do a quick job (cause you aren't getting paid much) and the client feels screwed because they were expecting Michelangelo. It's a bad deal for everyone but the crook. But you can't blame them for trying. It's all what you can negotiate.

Which is why I use a rep, negotiation is an art form that is not given the credit it deserves. Trust me, if you are not very good at it and not very knowledgeable (and not knowing when you don't know something is a very human weakness) about the market, you are leaving a lot on the table. It is worth the money.

But sometimes you have little choice. Let's say you work for a theme park development company. You figure out you were paid x for an illustration. Your employer sells the design package to a client, and if you saw it itemized, holy cow, they are marking it up 5x. You pay a big bill for the security of a regular paycheck.

Which leads me to save money, live well within your means, so you DO have a choice.

People out there can smell when someone is up against a wall, and will glue and screw you to it given the chance. Live your life so you do not have to say yes to a bad deal.

End rant!

Uhm on the depth issue, not sure what to say, a little OT. Get Ryan Churches video? It is really more than a technique, it is more of an issue of how a soup of particles affect how things look. It is a little too complex to go into here.

Distance is easy, just make it flat, not texture at all.

I would watch the scale of recognizable elements. The ceiling looks like a paneled suspended ceiling you would see in an office building, and the ducts reinforce this. That makes him look kinda tiny. Also, regardless of the ceiling type, nothing is cut in one piece like that. Play up how something is constructed, it makes it more believable.

Oh, OK, quickie to show what I meant. Scifi robot in the trump tower? Nah, I just made it cliché scifi industrial, but really just to show you what I meant about distance.

If we assume there is stuff in the air, diesel particulates whatever, there are tons of little service lights in the ceiling, and as you go back you see all that lit up air. So the initial grad goes from light at the bottom to darker at the top. The top is where the contrast and detail is, bottom is flat. Cheap distance. Different story when the janitor turns off the lights.

Here's something I cannot do easily, but I am learning. I still wrestle so much with the oil paint, the technical aspects of it totally affect the art. Painter IS like real media, in the many interacting variables that run you nuts. Oh well, the foot is OK, the rest is crap. I really should rethink doing these, 20 min is not enough time and I can't think about what I am doing, and bad habits are repeated and ingrained. But it is the only time I have to play with the paints, so I do it anyway. Bad excuse.



that was fun going into the basement. Scary down there.

All these are from 95-96. I was just starting to figure out that you could paint with PS.



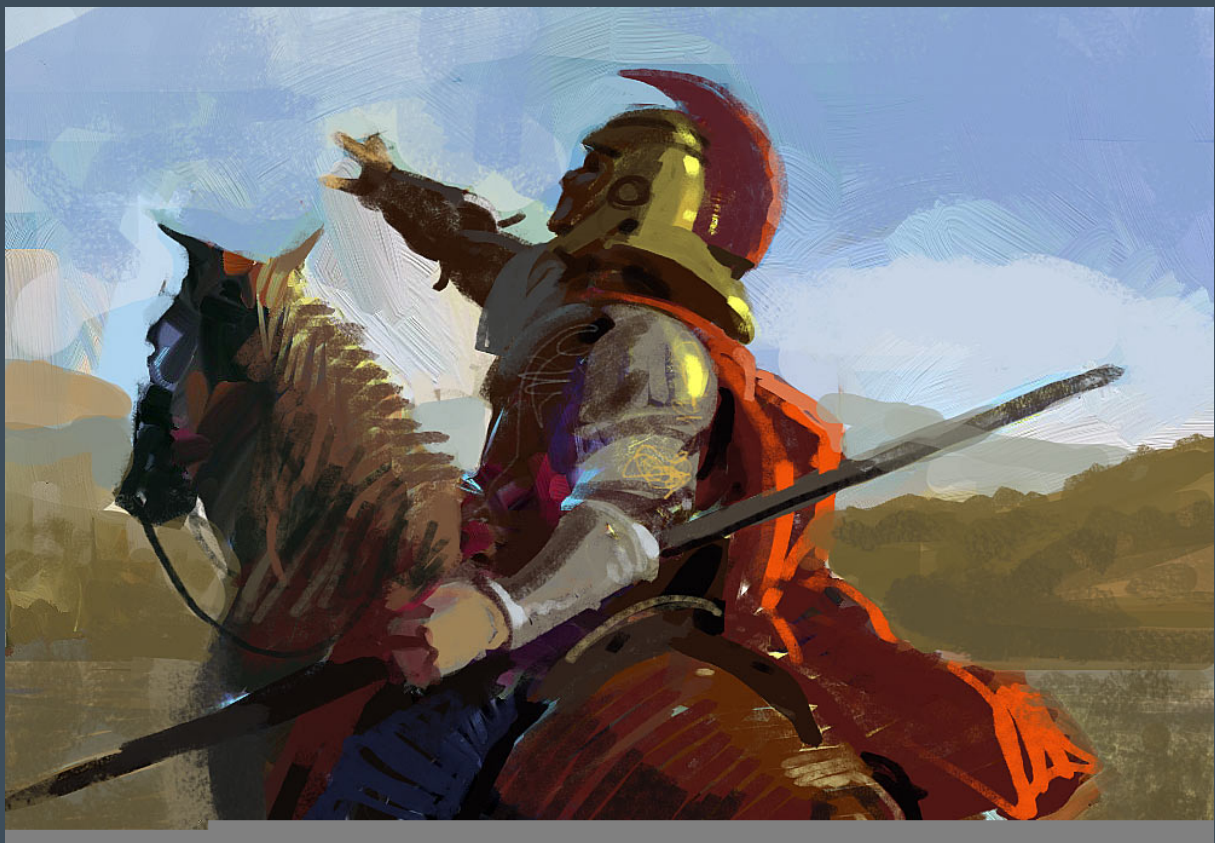
I was thinking that you could paint storyboards. How long does a board take? I gave myself 10 minutes. But these are simple easy to read images. Complex actions or expressions could take more time, but I think it is just not being picky about what methods you use to get the point across. I might use a little line and caricature to show actions. The key is readability.

It would be nice to do these as an antidote to the more finished stuff. Problem is where I live, most storyboard artists live under the thumb of director-man. Oh well.





Here's a very quick thought on your roman guy zhuzhu. I suppose you can take it or leave it depending on whether or not you think it is an improvement. I think that head is stronger cause you have painted so many of them, certainly more than you have painted romans on horses. So it is a question of understanding. I could have done a whole lot better job if I knew more about that subject. The more you know, the more you can simplify successfully. Also, you pushed your value and color to an extreme almost to the point of unreadable, by this I mean the shadow value is light, and to make up for that you pushed it to a cool color extreme. Sometimes you need separation in value a little. Also you were losing the identity of the surfaces as well. White highlight on horse mane as well as armor. Too much. Especially the horse mane. A furry, matte dark surface receding away from you will not be picking up much light, especially if the light is also behind you. That armor is smooth and at right angles to both the viewer and the light source. So that is why I say the mane and the armor should be treated differently.



there should be no problem with using a lot of turps in an oil. I am using 3 parts artists turp, 1 part CP linseed oil for the initial washes. As long as you remember fat over lean it should be fine. The problems come in where you lay down a thick layer, and come back over it later with thinned paint. Especially if you are using some type of metal dryer in large quantities. I knew a matte artist who would work in thin layers, and used gesso to get whites back and then glazed over that. I saw the paintings after 10 years and they were fine. But I would not like to see them after 100-200 years.

You can see in museums where the artist has put lean over fat. It cracks like crazy. I think it is the different shrinkage rate. If the lean is over the ground (and it is stable) then things are OK.

Ralph Mayer's artist handbook is the best I have found for this kind of info.

But I am very close to permanently giving up with oil. I cannot control it, the results are very ugly to me, and I have been at it longer than I would like to ponder. Seems mixed media, WC, gouache, acrylic are for me. But I love that wonderful value range. I have to keep trying.

Matthew, blur your eyes and look at your ref. See how the back arm is darker than the forward? His left side as well. You have painted all these with the same value range, and it flattens things out.

I will predict two retorts and parry them in advance 😊

1)"its a 30 second sketch!" Yes, but no matter how little time you have, you have to figure out what is the most important and get that. After the drawing, the big value relationships of the major forms/shapes are pretty important.

2)"I like to push the highlights cause it looks exciting..." I remember using gouache to highlight reflective car drawings at art center. God it was fun. One aspirin cures a headache, why not the whole bottle? Because you will die in twenty minutes with an ex-liver. Same thing with pushing contrast. Just say no! Read the sargent notes- "classify your values" There can be only one! brightest bright. Figure out where it is and make sure all else is subordinate.

Same with the darks (that's one sure giveaway photo abuse- poor value structure in the darks- unless the photo was good)

I have a long standing tradition of contradicting myself with an image, so here's to confusion



Mon, varnum, have you guys seen Steve Huston's work? He was a teacher of mine at school. He was a bodybuilder then, and I remember this huge arm gliding by my ear as I was struggling with a drawing and he would say "do it this way..." And you listened... I have always been fascinated by the idea of using physical threats to increase the rate and retention of instruction. Maybe some electrodes where the sun occasionally shines? Miss that ribcage and zaaaapp. You won't do it again.

But I remember Steve's work as totally competent but a little stiff. He has kept the competence but is no longer stiff, it is really amazing work. Check it out. I wish there were some larger jpgs available.

Mikko-

"You always keep talking about the "drawing" and not surface/painting tricks so I'm wondering why you decided to go back to this old sketch and not start over with a so called better drawing? Is it just the cleaning up and noodling part you despise?"

Reworking that image has a lot of reasons behind it. I am trying to get some images that will be printed for different markets, one of which has nothing to do with pirates and skulls and blood, so that image is saccharin enough to fit. I need the rez of a real painting to print well, so I did a WC of it resting the paints on the keyboard.

As far as drawing, I am not sure I know what you are getting at. The longer I do art the thing I think is most important is drawing. (please do not think that means lines!). And what is good drawing can be as subjective as anything else. I like the Iboshi image, from a drawing standpoint. It says what I want it to say, at least for the use I have for it. Or rather I should say that at my sorry state of development, it is the best I can do, so I have to run with it.

I have been working on a variety of media in getting print rez versions of some sketches. The issues are really complex, and I have had the most luck with acrylic. I am too impatient to work well with oil. I can't control the edges or shapes or values the way I want. With acrylic I can. I think it is mileage, as I used to paint in acrylic for jobs, so the mileage ratio is 100 to 1 between acrylic and oils. I want those deep rich saturated colors with oil and I will bleed to get them. Probably the best bet is to paint in acrylics and scumble with oils later. The nicest, most fun thing is to combine WC, then gouache, then pastel with a little colored pencil. If you keep awake, you can make some nice work this way.

Here's a disaster in progress, all oil. I have given up mostly. I will glaze over it to unify some things maybe, but it is half done and I can't get the drawing correct. Story of my life.



"Florence Academy of Art=Good??"

The atelier education is very deep and very narrow. If you like the work they produce, and think that you will always like it, by all means go that route. But it is not a well rounded art education.

If you go there and don't paint the way they want you to, you will get the same reaction as if you go to a more liberal school and try to paint academically. You will be ridiculed, as wrong as that may be.

I was pretty happy combining art center ID and illustration. It has been a good combination. I could not do what I do if I had gone to an atelier. When I was younger, I thought pretty much as they do, academic art is the One True Way and anyone who disagrees is a commie pinko whiner looking to get out of hard work. Having learned a bit more about the vastness of human expression, I am very glad I did not go and have my myopic ignorance set into stone so I could never grow and learn.

The academics fear and paranoia about "modern" sensibilities is every bit as dumb as the moderne who mocks realist art. Maybe I should say that each may not have a problem with the art, only the dumb things each say about the other out of fear and insecurity.

I have seen very very few people who have been trained the atelier way do well in the commercial arts. There are exceptions, but only a few. It may be a preference on their part, but they are not given the tools to do it. As I said, it is teaching a narrow and highly refined skill.

Learn to draw the way Mr. Villipu and Chen draw, if you want a broader base from which to go in different directions in the future. It focuses on understanding form, not replicating the optical effects of halftones.

If you like the work you see around these forums, ID or even architecture is a good choice.

The bigger problem is how to you educate someone how to be creative? Any structure you give them limits something. It is a problem in all education, not just art. But creativity itself is not a given. In eastern art and the atelier school,

continuity and reverence for the master is a higher value than individual expression. That's fine, as long as you are aware of it.

I am not going to rehash everything I have already said on this subject. Search on my name and art renewal if you want to find some quotes that I will probably regret.

I got a "D" in high school art. Pandas work is Waaay better than what I was doing at the same age.

Not everyone progresses at the same rate or at the same time. There were professional illustrators at art center that started with me. Talk about a hopeless feeling- sitting next to Michelangelo when I didn't know which end of the pencil to use. But they did not get much better, because they were fat and happy (and improvement becomes harder as you move along). I am making a living now with artwork, against many peoples predictions.

So on one hand don't sweat it, but don't compare yourself with your peers either, only the best work you can find. If you look at your peers, you might get a little complacent, "oh, looks like I'm doin OK..." Bad Idea.

What counts in the long run, and I mean over many many years, is doing it every day and thinking about what you are doing. You will find that the people who do well do this. People who get distracted or who are not fascinated by learning and are only focused on outputs fall by the wayside eventually.

Look at a more important indicator- what is your level of commitment and drive? What is your best guess about what this level will be over the next 20 years? This will be a much better predictor of eventual success than your technical skill right now.

Sketch from life, refined from memory. Looks clumsy to me. Bad use of oil paint, or limited at least



Thanks for the encouragement on the oil slick. I think that I need more variety of shapes and brush use with it. It is a little, uh, deapan, if you get what I mean. It looks like it was painted with the same brush, same stroke, same edge, same through out. And the shapes are a little wonky, cause, well, I just can't seem to get them where I want them with oil. I am working on it, and sometime you solve one problem and it helps you with another that you didn't think was connected. It's a Chinese puzzle. If it's hard to do, you are doing it or thinking about it wrong.

I have a thought, and I have no business saying it, and you can feel free to tell me to bug off, but maybe reconsider your process of tracing the initial outlines of your paintings. I never thought it was bad before, and my objection now has nothing to do with notions of cheating or anything like that. I think that the end result will be better if you do this and spend the time and care that it takes. I always thought if you trace it, it is accurate, can't improve on that! But you can. I am finding that drawing well has a lot more caricature and suppression and exaggeration than I ever suspected even with the most realistic style. I think that when you can draw really, really well, like about a thousand times better than where I am at, then you might be able to trace successfully. Rockwell and Drew Struzan are at that point. When you take a subject, internalize the forms, think about it, discard, exaggerate, and re-express them in your own way, the result is better, cleaner, more interesting, and less mechanical. And over time, working this way will make you a better artist with more control, because you have refined your thinking and perception.

I know I am not expressing this well, it has taken me so many years to even learn what I don't know about drawing, so trying to say it is really tough. Please don't think this is some mystical blather about the soul of the pose. It is very concrete.

I feel exactly the same way about drawing. I draw for a while and it is exhausting, so I avoid it. But like most things, it is more enjoyable when you know more about it and are better at it. I am getting more knowledgeable and it is getting slowly easier and more fun along the way. But I don't mean drawing as in using line and tone, painting well is mostly drawing, just not with lines. Drawing to me is about structure. Thurber and Silverstein are great drawers. There is a very strong foundation underneath what they do. I think they knew this stuff intuitively (talent) but I am afraid the rest of us have to figure it out with the frontal lobes. Sometimes I think the best drawers are animators. Ah, enough babbling

Yes, something like that. If you want to do things traditionally. I am finding it is important for what I want to do, but it may not be for everybody.

Yes I am very familiar with Church and his life. He was/is a great inspiration for me from early on.

Lunatique, The subject of schmids paintings to me seems to be the use of paint. I love the work based on this, and his drawing is impeccable.

As far as content versus technique, yes, I suppose with digital I am familiar enough with the tools I can go on autopilot some. But with oil, I just need to do a few thousand more of them. With brain engaged. Which means analyzing why each one sucks, until they don't anymore:) hopefully.
I will keep an eye out for your posts and give you my opinion, no problem.

Matthew, what you are referring to is additive and subtractive technique, and yes, that can help out with a lot of things. It's a great way to work digitally especially. I wonder is the blue dots in the Bouguereau's paintings are artifacts. The museum was dark and the camera handheld. I brightened up the images as well. But I know there are amazing subtle warm and cool greys in all his skintones. I read he used no pouncing or blender brushes. How he did it is beyond me.

As far as camera obscura and lucida, hmmm.

/RANT

You know there are universal limits to many phenomena, such as the speed of light in a vacuum, the number of coeds you can fit in a phone booth, etc. I had thought there was a limit just how stupid someone can be, but art renewal proved (once again) that there is no such limit. They want to call names and write like a 12-year old brown shirt, well I can too.

The fact that these tools were used has been known for a long long time. It is nothing new. I am surprised that this was new to Hockney. And why would anyone have a problem with it? Hockney does not because he is a thoughtful artist and realizes that the artists who created their incredible master works are not diminished in the slightest by the fact that they used these tools. Not

the slightest.

And not all artists did, and not all the time, and to different degrees. Maybe different people were intelligently exploring the uses of technology to further their expressive range? Imagine!

To think it does is an insult, to think that the greater part of art is getting the dots in the "right" places. It is an insult to the great men that art renewal claims to revere. I really hope to explain myself better someday, but drawing is so much more than that. It is greater than eye hand coordination. You are not a camera! And use of a camera or drawing device will not hide the artist you are one little bit. In some ways it will show your shortcomings in even greater relief. Unless you know what you are doing, which the masters did.

If students use this type of thing too much, yes, it can be really damaging. But again, it depends entirely on what they are after. We don't all want to be MASTER DRAWER OF THE SEVEN UNIVERSES!!!

In the past I played with these things, I even owned one, and I got rid of it because they did not help me with what I am after. If they did, I would use them in a heartbeat. Only throw out a tool because you have thought through things and it does not further your work, not out of artistic machismo.

/end rant

and I have to post this cause it's all I got right now 🤔



Use a bridge. It is just a piece of plex set on two legs (also of plex) that you set over the artwork and run the brush along the edge. Makes perfect ruled lines once you get the hang of it. Old ACCD trick. This is how syd mead does all of his gouache painting. And that is his favorite brush. I think he goes through one every painting or two.

Ax-hv- thanks! I had to look up "laconic" my only advice is what I have said before, paint a lot and think while you are doing it. And try to do it from life so you have to deconstruct forms that you see and reconstruct them on paper instead of transcribing shapes. Staying in the shape world will keep you from getting anywhere. It's a good place, many illustrators live there their whole careers, but you will be very limited.

. I heard a movie director say once how he was jealous of storyboard artists, and that they could draw stuff from many angles and with different lenses in the same image. Impossible to photograph, unless very fancy CG is involved. With that police piece, the lens for the foreground is pretty wide. Distant things like buildings or mountains get really compressed. But a long lens to make the buildings seem impressive allows you to see only a few police, and then flattens them out a lot. You are only looking from one direction, not the combination of across and down and up allowed by a wider lens. This image is a combination of those two things, what is best in a long and short lens. Without the barrel distortion of a wide lens either.

So if we are seeing a small portion of the hemisphere of the sky in the long lens used for the BG, you are seeing just what is along the horizon. Not much of what is up. The warm color along the horizon might be just there, not across the whole sky. It depends on the depth and density of the particles that are picking up the sunlight (behind us). Since we can't see the rest of the sky, it is hard to know. If the particles are large and heavy and have come from the ground, they are probably compressed there and the sky overhead is clear blue. Some of the other fill lighting, the pavement for example, shows this.

Imitation is the way everyone learns. When I went to AC, everyone had a Syd Mead rip in the portfolio. Also a Joe Johnston star wars marker sketch. I was no different. To move on to something different and worthwhile takes a lot of time (decades). Give it time. If someone is interested in doing something new, the steady pressure of intelligence and curiosity and personality will sift through the mountains of influence and forge something that the audience will see as "new." But it cannot happen overnight, especially in an area so well

trodden as naturalistic painting or entertainment concept work. Fine art is a little different. Being original is the beginning and the end.

I know that some on this forum see a lot of work that seems to be overly influenced by my work. For me, it is creating an overexposure (aren't you sick of seeing it, whether it is done by me or others?) and an erosion of the market. I have seen this coming and am preparing as best I can for what happens to successful illustrators over time. I am not upset at all by it; it's the way things are. Might as well get pissed off at sunlight or gravity. If you do something the market responds to, others will follow. It can be bad for others if they get to complacent with it and not use it to go on. But I guarantee that of the people who are influenced by my work, in 20 years most will be doing something different with their art. So no worries, I will be OK and so will the younger artists here.

But what I am hearing is maybe there are people here who would rather see me not post here anymore. They feel the influence is too strong here, for whatever reason. All I can say is I do nothing that I feel encourages it, I post, I talk blah blah. Not much in the way of self promotion. You have to at least grant me that. I cannot control how people react to me. It is a little embarrassing at times, and I feel I have not earned either the accolades or the wrath that people send my way.

If any of you have gone to a touristy area you have probably seen a bunch of galleries grouped together that sell art to people with more money than "taste." The prices are extraordinary. And in some cases they are crooks. I have seen what is sold as a Haring or Chagall or Matisse print for 20 grand. It is worth about 50 bucks, beside the thousand dollar frame. There is a little sign below the counter (well hidden but you can find it) telling you to buy what you like, regardless of the "investment" value. I suppose this has come up in past lawsuits and now protects the gallery to a certain degree.

The tactics and angles and pitches are far more interesting than the art. And it works wonders.

You might ask why would I want to swim in these polluted waters? As I have

said many times, I am an illustrator, and this is another form of illustration. I can paint pirates for a game company and I am too good for these galleries? Hah... So some soul searching ensued and I came to the conclusion that it is no different. The one big difference is I will have to indulge in some heavy handed self promotion to be successful at this. If it doesn't work, nothing lost.

The only point of this show really is to talk to the other gallery owners and operators and see if there is an angle for my stuff. We will know a lot more after the opening.

Glitterbug, see above, but I am not switching careers at all, just seeing if I can expand it. I did not read any books on self promotion, but it's no big deal if things go well or not.

Balistic, yes, some people see this as a step down, some a step up. I see it as all the same. I am an illustrator. And not just in the strict definition of the term, i.e. I make images that support other media. I am an illustrator by taste, I can't shed the skin. And I don't really want to. I like bud light not white wine and I don't want to change!

Eyewoo, I know that you have been poking about similar markets yourself, with not as much success as you would like. Maybe I am wrong about this, correct me if I am. As I remember, the galleries and market that you were after were a little more serious than these galleries. These people see themselves as the salemen they are, no pretension at all. They want something they can sell to upper Middle America. The more "serious galleries" are the same underneath, but with a layer of pretension shoveled on.

Random blather--

The strange thing is you know how much the pretension of serious artists bothers me, and I don't take things too seriously (I always have thought my art to have a little self-parody, at about the James Bond level). So these galleries are really a perfect match. Tasteless, yes! That's me too! We should get along fine! Can you sell it?

I really would encourage everyone else here who is looking to make a living at some art related field to take more that attitude. Yes you have to do the work

and have some kind of quality content, but you have to find where where it is valued and unique. The different marketing strategies that I have seen are genius. 20 artists proofs, highlighters, etc, someone thought up all this stuff, and it makes money.

If you think it is crass, that is something you have to deal with. And it did by not taking myself or my work so seriously.

Becoming what I see as a better artist, such as getting better as a painter, learning the head, learning color etc. is a very separate activity from selling.

The nobility of the starving artist is a load. Starving is not proof of value. Most famous artists and musicians were successful in their time, the reverse were isolated incidences.

I like money, lots of it, and you do too if you are honest about it. I live like a college student, because the usual trappings of money don't interest me. But I am after security and freedom which is way cooler than a Porsche.

So be as creative in your marketing as you are in the art. I am trying, but I am not as good at it as I would like.

But one thing I will not do is try to sell to someone who can't afford it. I could see a grandmother walk into a gallery and say she hocked her teeth to "invest" in a print so she could put her granddaughter through college. That is my nightmare. These things are worth wildly different amounts to different people. But I will not misrepresent them as investments. If you want the art because you like it, great. There are lots of artists who I would pay a pretty penny for, if I had such a thing, because I like the art. Buying art as an investment is not wise, unless you know exactly what and where and how. A Thomas Kincade or a spoogedemon is not an investment and I will not represent it as such, not even a little. I suppose that is where I draw the line. And it could eventually stop me from proceeding with certain lines of retailing.

Well the show came and went and I am glad it is over. It was pretty much a disaster. From the mid afternoon it started pouring rain, so we had about 75

people come through. They would quickly walk through, not much look at the prices at all, and head for the booze and food. Did not sell a single thing.

Here are some pics





did these fast in front of audience (ulp)

you can feel the audience attention wandering, I have always said an illustrator was an entertainer, and I guess this was pretty literal.

"So, when does the magic happen, Mr. Mullins?"

"Is THAT done?"





It's pretty complex making things simple. But if I had to simplify that, I would say that there is too much information/contrast in the shadows. Decide what is in light and what is in shadow and don't mix them up. Think like a comic artist. Two values, but if they are well thought out and designed and drawn they can look totally real. Think like that, but instead of making the light white and the shadow black, make the light a 7 and the shadow a 3. Then go ahead and use 5-10 in the light and 1-3 in the shadow to pull out sub forms. DO NOT use 1-5 in any part of the light, or use 5-10 in any areas of the dark. Keep your edges a little softer in the shadows, a little sharper in the light, you are done. (0 is black, 10 is white) Deciding what is in shadow and light for a particular object is pretty hard in words. I will leave that up to you and that is 99 percent of the struggle.





So you are stuck in Arizona and can't find work. You say you have friends in the biz, which is all you need. Get them to spread the word around. If the work is what they are looking for, great. Never miss a deadline and don't screw up. You are only as good as the last job completed, and the cost for them to replace you is low. The client is ALWAYS right, and especially with you being where you are. Bad word of mouth travels even faster and lasts longer than good word of mouth.

But lets say that your contacts don't turn up jobs. Then you have to ask and listen very carefully to what they say. Remember they are always right.

The main reason you would not get the jobs is your work is what they are looking for, or is not professional enough, or, drum roll, "good" enough. You have to be prepared to hear this over and over, and work your ass off until you do not hear it any more. (And learn to recognize when someone is being polite.) They want to hire someone who can do the job because every competent person in their address book gives them more power/comfort/flexibility over other artists.

It is not personal if you don't get the job (unless you are really weird). The stranger you are, the better you have to be. So take the load off that side of things and get a haircut, speak gud Englishhh and be reliable. You know that.

The work has to be to a certain level of technical polish, and has to be different enough to set you apart. It can't be too different; this is not a personal expression. Both the film and game biz are really very conservative given the size of investment required. Look through the starwars art books. Are you this "good?" OK, when will you be? The clock is ticking. To be fair, I ask myself the same questions. But the question of how to get better has been asked and answered many times. They are really good at addressing this over at conceptart.org.

If the variety of work in your book is large, there is a better chance that a client will feel confident that you can do something not shown. If you show flexibility, there is a higher chance that you can solve their particular need. I remember a guy who did amazing airbrush renderings of red, wet coke cans sitting in ice.

That was it. Chances of getting work are slim if you can only do one thing well. But if you spread yourself too thin you run the risk of not polishing your work to a needed professional level overall. Your time would be too scattered.

This is why I have always said to concentrate on drawing, it underlies just about everything. I remember I had a type class (hand lettered serif stuff) I count this as drawing. It really helped me. I don't mean drawing as in using lines, but in being aware of structure and how things are put together and how to represent/ stylize/ play with it. Drawing even helps 3-d artists. Sculpture is a great way to get the forms in your head.

OK, lets say you are really good now. How to get your work in front of the right noses? In the old days you had to physically take your portfolio around NY/LA and show it to art directors. The other way was to buy a page in a workbook for about 3 grand (plus technical costs). This worked OK. Now, the workbooks are dinosaurs and nobody uses them as far as far as I know. The internet has replaced all of it. The workbook used to having a stranglehold over the client/artist path and then tried the same idea on the internet. The deal is usually" we will give you 2MB of pics at 500x400, and link you with 8 million other artists, all for only 75 bucks a month!" Clearly their idea of their own importance was distorted by their previous dominance. Kinda like AOL. Now they can't give it away. But the film biz never used illustrators from this pile. I think most of the illustrators that were in the book would prefer to do print work for no other reason than they find it more "highbrow."

As far as the film biz goes, I have never really worked on film productions. You really need to be able to go into the studio every day and I was never willing to do this. Art center guys all know each other and pull their buddies into productions and around union restrictions. I can't be of much help here. Most of my work is for post production and effects houses. I have only recently begun to do concept work on the very front end. I really thing that the reason I can do this now is the work is strong enough that the production is willing to put up with me being off location. I was going to work for LOTR, but I could/would not move to NZ for the duration. I was worried that moving to Hawaii would put a dent in work, but the opposite has happened. "wow, he's good enough to live there, he must be the stuff!" and other such very Hollywood nonsense.

I did spend 19 years in LA working, going to clients (sometimes barefoot) and generally hand holding. I screwed up my fair share of jobs, and never heard

from those clients again. Luckily they were not the wrong clients, or I did not screw up too badly.

But am I getting work now because I was around all that time or has my work gotten better? If you do live outside the area, your work has to be stronger than the competition that lives locally. Very simple truth. If the work is good enough, put it on the web and word of mouth will do the rest.

I guess there are several tiers. 1) not good enough to get work no matter what 2) good enough for manual labor, if you are polite and your attractive sister is willing to give backrubs 3) good enough to compete with most professionals 4) good enough to live off site, 5) good enough to be expensive, slow, rude and live far away. 6) good enough so that George and Steven will personally fly to your Himalayan cave with piles of money and give you a backrub for simply listening to their pitch.

The problems of living remotely are not insurmountable; you just have to be a little better at what you do. And how much better has gotten lower since the internet became capable.

So concentrate on the work, put it out there, and if nothing comes back, work on it some more, according to what you hear. You might be thinking that this is easy for me to say, but keep in mind that I just had my ass handed to me in the tourist art market. Clearly my work was not good enough to even sell one print. I am listening on how to get better, and remember, the client (money) is the sole arbiter of what is "good."

See the harder shadow shape of the chin go into the softer, rounder jaw area and then go hard again into where the jaw bone goes into the ear? Play up those differences. I did too much here to make the point. If you look at the jaw, there really is no line there at all, just an area of shadow.

Same idea on the lower lip. You have it outlined, but there really is a lost edge there.

Also look at the lit area of the far side of the neck, keep that nice and crisp. There is a lot of contrast in that shape and it tells a lot about the shape of the lower face, so it calls out for a little more care.

Take a photo, or better yet, look at, some trees and blur it a lot (squint) Paint that!

Trees have are very specific in their major forms, from type to type. Leaves do not exist!



I make a living at art now and I started seriously in design at 22 and then illustration 2 years later. You can do it, I agree with Pat and others.

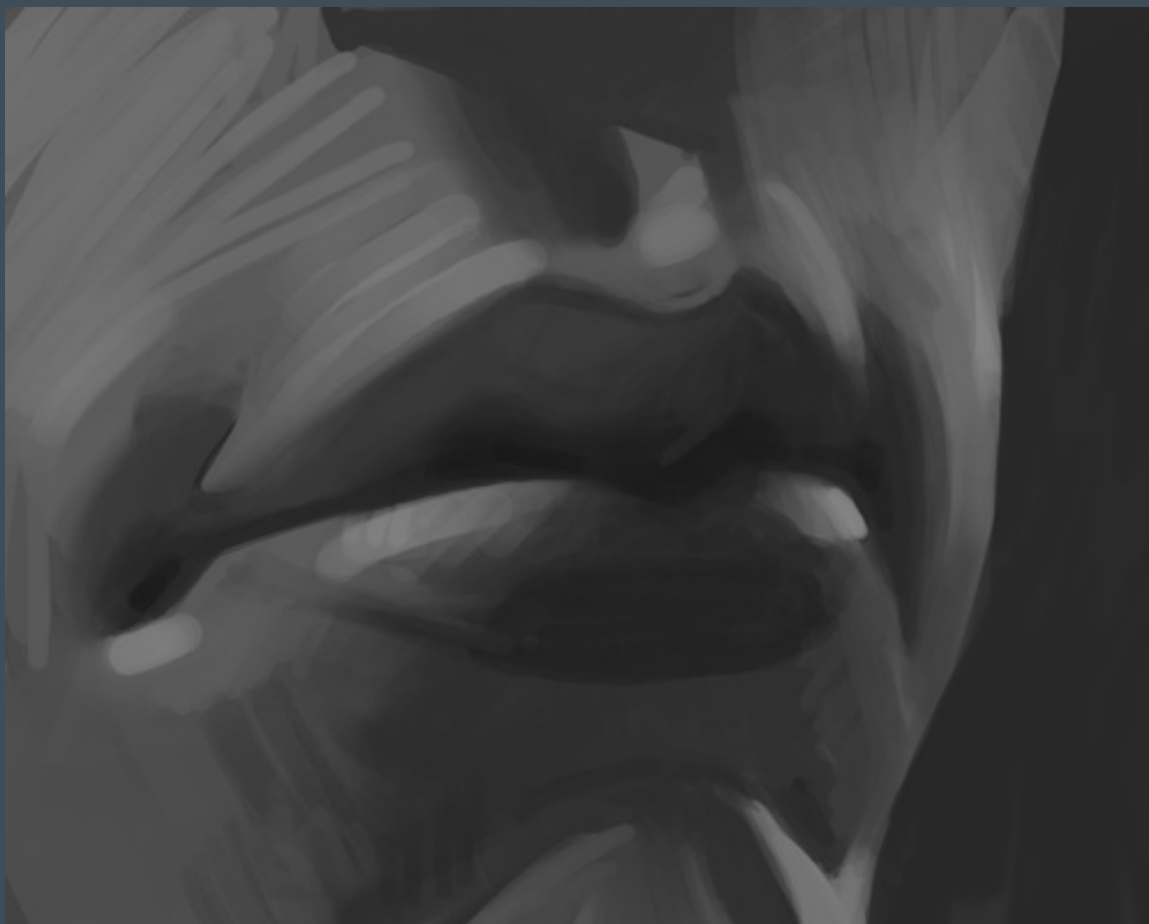
I bet if you look at the head in it's simplest form, there are different values to the forehead, nose and cheeks. If the light is diffuse from above, whatever faces upwards will get the most light. Feel your own head, look at it in the mirror, I bet your nose faces upwards more than the front plane of the forehead. Even though the cheeks may face upwards somewhat, the light is cut by the diffuse shadow from the brow.

So get these big planes of the head working first, don't worry about smoothing anything.

If you are interested, try this image again, but in a dark room with a bright light. Make a difference between light and shadow and don't confuse the two. Where a form turns away from the light and goes into shadow, make the edge soft. Where a cast shadow falls on a form, make the edge hard. A simple and greatly abused system, but one you should know.

I played up that feeling in these lips. There are many examples of form and cast shadows here. You should ignore the light coming in from the opposite side, just let it go off into dark.

Also, when you are drawing, constantly check alignments of things. See the corner of the mouth and where it lines up with the eye? The top of the ear and the brow? Be precise and make all these relationships as accurate as you can. What you are doing really is putting an invisible and informal grid onto your minds eye. very helpful.



Get a good anatomy book and copy the drawings and photos for a while. Make accurate copies. You don't know enough yet to try and make this stuff up.

And then go to life class. Don't think about why this is difficult or inconvenient, simply do it.

Carry a sketchbook with you at all times (the chicks dig it) and draw until your fingers hurt.

I know this goes without saying, but this is all totally my own warped opinion.

This is a subject I have thought quite a bit about. I was always intrigued by the idea of finding the physical basis of why my brain says "more" when I look at an

artist I like and "less, please" when I look at 70's wallpaper.

But first, a confession. I have had many arguments with teachers over the years about various theories of composition. In my opinion about 99% are total crap, made up by bored art history professors who struggle to make art quantifiable, and therefore academically respectable. It is their job, after all! I have never seen a rule that cannot (and is often) broken successfully.

If there were some way of creating a work of art that has universal appeal, then you would expect that you could show it to a bushman from New Guinea and he would go "totally cool!" Art is learned, to a great extent, I feel. But we have all had the experience of seeing our favorite artists work for the first time and having our heads blown off, a real physical sensation. There are artists that I am in awe of now that I did not understand and could have cared less about 5-10 years ago. If there were a physical component to art, you would think this would not be true.

I think if there were universal responses wired into our brains, all art would have something in common. I have not found that yet. You might also expect to be able to create art that every person would respond to in a similar way. I think that is what is cool about art, it is a great Chinese puzzle that binds up the totality of who a person is, not just a physical response.

Steven, I think it is so cool that you are interested in this kind of thing. I can only wish you luck in the pursuit. If you revolutionize the art world, I will be right there saying "I knew that guy when..." You could spend a career trying to answer these questions, and people have. So if it interests you in a general way, the way it does me, great. But if you want to learn about it to make your art better, I gave up on that a long time ago. It's like using a telescope to find God, so you can figure out which Church to go to on Sunday. I found my time was much better spent making art.

When I am struggling with the composition of a picture, and I do struggle a lot, I think just about what looks cool. I purposefully don't go any deeper than that.

The risk you run in trying to measure these things is the art will die. That is not a touchy-feely statement. Look at art history and you see the back and forth of the classical vs. the romantic, the measurer vs. the rebel. Usually a guild or academy or group decides that they have indeed discovered what is real art. The movement quickly atrophies and dies soon after. A formal structure is what

classical art is all about.

I think is an acquired, learned taste, and I am glad about that, really. It shows me that there is no such thing as good art, it is rather arbitrary. This guarantees that I will be surprised where I am in the future in what I respond to.

I agree that some very basic stuff is wired in, a babies response to loud or soft noises, smiles, etc.

The genetic similarity comes from the population going through the eye of the needle, almost extinct at some point. But standards of beauty, sexual or artistic, seem to me to be all over the place. Some cultures love fat women. It was quite the thing in medieval Japan to paint ones teeth black. Beautiful? To them.

It is interesting to me that what one considers beautiful can to another be the height of annoyance. You would think if you did not like something it you might just be neutral. I think art has a strong social and political component that cannot be ignored.

I would go so far as to say there is no such thing as good art. It is a powerful illusion that there is. If you swallow that, the idea of good composition goes away too. Just look at the variety of art and peoples reaction to it-even the disagreement in this thread about the Gerome painting. There is educated taste, but once again, you are back to an arbitrary set of rules. But again, are those rules arbitrary, or are they based on physiology? I think they are based on culture and politics, personally. I think velvet paintings are beautiful. They actually have very strong “compositions” according to many such systems. I don’t hold that against them 😊

But your ideas are making me take another look at the whole thing. Maybe there is something that will cause involuntary artistic orgasm in every human who sees it. hehe...

One idea- It does seem that every work of art has some kind of contrast. The presence of one element and then the lack of it. Repetition and then relief of repetition. In music there is tone and silence, loud and soft, high and low, etc. In visual art there is the obvious contrast of light and dark, but it goes a lot

deeper than that. In your dragon fly think how much the idea of difference plays in it. From flat to texture, activity to calmness, bright to dull. If you think about it, the list goes on forever. And with naturalistic art, you have the whole gee-wiz 2-d looks like 3-d thing. That further complicates it.

I think that maybe the one universal that creates interest. Might be obvious, just a thought.



pay attention to the cast versus form shadow edges. cast shadows are sharper in this kind of lighting.

The width of the form shadow (like where the brow turns to shadow) shows the radius of the form. If it is a constant width, it starts to look mechanical. Living things always have movement this way.

I moved the cast shadow from the brow so the light hits the eye a little bit. This is good to show a good detail better, but also if you look at the head from the front, the brow is probably not protruding that far. There is a wrap to the head, the eye fits into that cylinder. You have to think like a modeler if want to render something.

I put a little reflected light into downward facing planes in the shadow. Really any plane that get exposure from a lit plane.

I think you should work the whole image up at once. Get the body in there and get the big major shapes so you can start judging relationships. Some don't work this way, but it takes longer to get good at it and if you start with the big picture, you are more open to happy accidents that may take the picture where you might not have thought of in the first place.

Only thing would suggest is holding back where you work the forms up to the highest light and then a reflective highlight. Keep that where you want the eye to stay and play awhile. Right now you have a lot of highlights scattered around (including some not really supported by the halftone information-shame!) that makes the image "bounce and chatter."

I know it is so tempting, you put on that first reflective highlight and it looks so cool you just have to keep going. Resist! Try to make the image work with the halftones as long as you can. By halftones I mean the values and form that are in the light but are not the brightest light or the top of the form. If you take this as far as you can, you will be surprised how little is needed elsewhere, and the highlights don't become needed as well.



This was done a while ago ~year.

Self crit-

Perspective is not followed closely enough. Even though this was a sketch, just for design direction, it does not feel right because there are so many wonky things going on all over. Every little error multiplies on itself.

The color is a little monotone, with variations in material and local color not well thought out. This is a complex mechanical subject; there would be so many finishes and materials that should be used. I kinda covered them all with dust. The glass windows and the glass cockpit help.

The little ship is not my design. The value range on it is a little deep, the blacks got a little out of hand. It could be fixed by a few more dark accents in the foreground.

The red glow in the hangar is just not working. It is bright enough that it would be influencing more stuff around it.

From a design sense, there is monotone not only in color, but in so many ways. I have not played up differences enough in different areas. I need areas of less and more activity.

But I am really sick of doing this kind of imagery.

Well, sketch is maybe a wrong term, connotes the wrong thing. It was a design image to be used by modelers and texture artists to make this place in 3-d. Also it was used to show bean counters what their money was going to be spent on. So it really is not a finished piece of art, to stand on it's own.

I should have made the tube that stretches over the mid ground really on a different grid. Right now it is either out of perspective or just a little skewed. Should make it really different to show it is intentionally placed.

I go out and do one of these things a day now. Every day, without fail. It is a nervous tick. It is very valuble, and kicks my ass constantly. You have to remain on your toes and think hard and fast. I am still struggling with the freaking oil paint. If ever there was a medium designed to run me insane.



I am a little insecure about my pencil drawings, mainly cause I never do them. But one thing I do is change my process all the time. It leads you to things you would never have seen if you don't. I remember some car designers begin ideation about car forms on one project with salt water taffy. The end result was very unique.

So in that spirit, I am doing what every other artist does first- a line drawing! But my line work has always been really fuggly, but this one is a little better, believe it or not. I sat down and said, "draw until something comes out."

I have been inspired by all the great character work I see here, and some of the stuff over at Elfwood. Thanks for bringing that to my attention, Isric.

The horizontal lines are print through. I like to draw on the back of old printer paper. This one had an invoice on it. Nothing intentional.

The plan is to paint it. Any ideas?



I posted this drawing a while ago, and then did this and lost interest. I might start over.





The issue of the skin color depends on what his skin local color really is. It is green right now! But it might be a much warmer under more neutral light. I was after the neat effect of light that you can see at sunset. The warm red of the sunlight hits green trees, so you have a local color and a light color that are compliments. The result is gray, yes, but a very rich gray with thousands of tiny variations that make it bounce. It did not succeed.

Study how light falls on cylinders and cones, then look at real drapes.

As the drape goes to the top, the radius of the fold decreases. This is simple, but where it hits the ground you should study the real thing, then understand in the abstract why you see the values you do, then you can do it out of your head. Try to do just the forms first, the pattern makes it a lot more complex.

I am trying to plan and finish these things with a little more thought, and it is better than it was. The first few I tried to take further were a disaster. This one is better, but not where I really want to go.

I kept on wanting to add more to the right side to look over the shoulder of the pirates adversary. But the idea was to play enough with the face that the viewer's interpretation was better than spelling it out.



I used some photos that I took of a model at life painting class. I modified things a bit though. The lighting and colors, hmm. The colors are dependent on what local colors are there and what light source is incident on them. You can vary the colors around this basic setup. But as I have said, if the values are correct, you can do what you like with colors. The values are what take the thought, though.

I think that it looks like an oil painting cause of the way it is painted. The shapes are broken down that way and the edges are built up that way too. The sword hilt is roughly spherical, and the hand fits inside. I think the rendering of the hilt is not specific enough to show this form. The tighter you get, the more you are

responsible for. I use, Photoshop, I cannot handle painter. It seems to take over, like bryce, leaving it's imprint on things. Also it seems really slow at decent rez. How can you handle 600,000 interactive variables like that?

I worked on this a while, maybe a week and a half, working 2 hours a day, so, 20 hours? Kinda slow. Now I think about it, I could have used those 20 hours to do other things. But I have to discipline myself to do more finished work like this. You learn different things entirely.

I did use photo ref for the sleeve, but the face is largely made up.

I agree that he should have some other dudes around him and I did play with this, but it seemed to take the focus away from the main character. I did want to play down the blood in this one. I agree that the reflected light on the bottom of the hat is not reading. Something that black and the strong main light is barely lighting it at all would not lighten up that much with the relatively weak reflected light.

I shaved it a little too close and got fancy and ambitious with the facial expression. I wanted to make it very ambiguous as to what he was seeing/ reacting to/ etc. I wanted a look of recognition. All this is too fancy. A basic snarl would have been much better.

I think that the overall value pattern is weak, it could be a simpler statement with more impact. A stronger, simpler design. How to do this and still be really finished? That's sorta what I am still after. It's always something.



Draw what nobody else draws. This is a solid answer to the question posed in the other thread.

I see artists wandering around the fields until they see a view that reminds them of something they saw Monet do once...

Look around your house. Draw what is NOT picturesque and been drawn to

death. Maybe draw the dead bugs in the windowsill. What you get out of original subject matter is twofold,

1) you have to think through the problems yourself, leading to a larger artistic mental muscle, and

2) your work might be more original.

Of course I am not saying abandon 500 years of learning coming behind you, but be aware of the damage that listening too closely can cause. It can blind and overwhelm you.

On the other hand, I think originality is overrated. It is accepted without question as the highest artistic value. It's the "without question" that is unfortunate. If you consciously decide that originality is the pinnacle, that's fine. It is a matter of values, not a matter of right and wrong.

I hope that makes sense. A little bit of originality goes a long way. You do not need to reinvent the wheel every time you pick up a pencil.

The one thing that will make your time well spent is to think about what you are doing. Learn to look and analyze. The more you internalize and understand about about what you are drawing, the more that will come through in however or whatever you draw. And I am not talking about touchy feely stuff, I mean understand about its physical nature and form. Drawing just to put in the hours is better than nothing, but concentrated study will really get you ahead.

ahhhh! Help me, turn off my brain!!

I am about as analytical as anyone around on most subjects, but this one I am trying to leave alone.

Make the image what YOU want to see, what floats YOUR boat.

Trying to make compositions better through analysis is bound to mess you up bad. You will end up repeating yourself in a misguided attempt to make "good"

compositions.

It's like trying to fall asleep. The harder you try, the worse it gets.

I have seen inexperienced artists do really well with compositions (meaning I like the feeling in their art, nothing more) but mostly I think that compositional skill comes with years of work, of doing. You cannot bootstrap yourself up on this.

I have no doubt that underneath all that feel-it-baby stuff there is a mechanism, and logic and history tells us that mechanisms can be dissected, understood and reassembled and made to work better, but I think this is too complex for a working artist to deal with. And you know how dangerous a little knowledge can be.

I am a romantic, as opposed to a classicist, as you can tell from what I am writing here. I guess it is just a different trip. I feel that my compositional skill is still pretty weak, and that is something I have on the list after I get better with the figure. But I think that it is not something you can consciously improve.

But if you are working in a genre of classical art that has rules, you can follow the rules and make good art. It is good cause it followed the rules! There is something wrong there, to me.

I have had countless discussions with my instructors at AC about this. Some feel the way I do, and I suppose I liked their work better. The 19th century was about the loosening of rules that had been derived from the ancient world and thought to be the definition of good art. The Romantics did wonderful art and broke all the rules. The same is true in music. Look at what was considered "good" harmonic practice. Bach and Mozart had a strong mathematical basis for what they wrote. Beethoven started to "break" those harmonies. It has continued through now. That is one reason why the big B is remembered.

Please don't get the idea that this is an excuse for indulgence, and that is if a rule is broken, it must be good. That is dumb the other way. What I am saying is that the Romantic ideal is still based on solid principles, but they are a great deal more complex than the classical and may not be amenable to easy analysis. Maybe someday all the principles that come into play will be analyzed and understood, and the academics, bless their souls, will do it, I have no doubt. I am not a mystic by any stretch.

It's a giant Chinese puzzle that you can only get the barest glimpse of.

So to the aspiring academics, study on. To practicing artists and illustrators, just feel-it-baby.

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It is TOTALLY legitimate. Tracing does not change the value, to me, anyways.

It is what it is. A master who traces creates a masterwork, if that is the goal. Many artists and illustrators have done this. Their work generally does not attempt to duplicate the effect of a photo, as an experienced artist can do so much more.

The simple fact of tracing does not in itself alter whether or not the work is well done.

Look at the posters done for Star Wars, the re-releases and the phantom

whatever. They are drawings with a little airbrush and prismacolor. They are traces with a lucigraph. Are they nice? Yesss, they are really nice. If I were to give the same photo to a hack, would it compare? Not in the least.

The artists who have used mechanical aids in drawing go back to the Renaissance, where a mechanical contrivance set the whole thing into motion in the first place. Sargent, Mucha, Leyendecker, Rockwell, all used them. Some of the real SupEr DrawErs.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

There is a reason why drawing, esp. life drawing, is at the base of so many seemingly unrelated disciplines. When you draw, you have to think, you have to perceive and internalize and put out again what you have decided. You are digesting reality. This process, done over and over hopefully for thousands of hours, develops a sensitivity that is hard to describe. It goes beyond just a “personal style,” more like you become a good designer, one who imposes their own kind of order. Sculpting from life does the same thing. You are internalizing the structure of nature.

This is why life drawing is in the foundation of most art related fields. It is not because moldy old men like those ancient oil paintings of fat women. And don’t think that life drawing has to be just of naked people. Clothed is fine, and draw everything else as well.

Why are photos not as good? You end up just copying shapes, and that is not a good way to start. If you have a lot of experience in life drawing, you can work successfully from photos. Like one bowlful of ice cream will not give you a heart attack, but enough of it really will. Photos are great tools, as long as they are not abused. The abuse of photographs is PAINFULLY obvious. Is it really even needed to point it out?

But I have seen too many illustrators get sucked into the lucigraph, never to return. I had a teacher at AC that said in his long experience, he saw the ability to draw was directly related to alumni’s income and general success as an illustrator/artist. I am afraid computers are accelerating the process of drawing becoming lost.

Usually what happens is the student draws a lot from life (cause they have a gun to their head) in school, and then time pressures begin, and the luci is a

fast way out. Then the skills start to go a little bit, and the luci becomes more and more of a crutch. It spirals from there.

Another way to look at it. Look at a Rockwell head. If it came later in his life, it was probably traced. It took decades for him to reach that level of refinement. It takes a few weeks of practice to duplicate a photo so that few could tell the difference. Both pieces are traced. It is what I said before- tracing does not affect whether or not something is good or not. It is far beyond that.

Um, and if you say you liked the traced photo more than the Rockwell head, what I just wrote does not apply to you.

This is just another idea of how to get more out of painting from photos. In most of yours, there is a lot of contrasty surface details, scrubby marks that in one sense create a lot of textural interest and activity, but also can hide that the foundation is not as strong as it could be. My suggestion is to simplify things as I have done, and then work activity back into the surface, if you want. Right now, the texture is taking over a bit and it is losing organization. Get the big, blocky shapes to say as much as you can, then whatever texture you include will be that much more effective. You can do it all at the same time, just be really aware of the drawing.

Also try to paint the forms of what you are seeing, go beyond what is in the photo. The main head I am guessing was flatly lit in the ref. I eliminated the light in front of the figure, making the front planes dark. Changing things like that in studies from photos can really teach you a lot. It becomes more thinking and less shooting fish in a barrel.

Hope this helps



Drawing first. If you get nothing else right, get the drawing at least ballpark. Whether you are using soft fuzzy areas of color or hard comic outlines, drawing is still the beast. And gesture is the most important thing about drawing, to me.

Then value. Many different ways to show form with value, but it has to be consistent. "Synthetic" lighting, like Burne Hogarth or a 3-d program has the light source as coming from the viewer. The greater the angle of the surfaces normal to the line of sight, the darker the plane. This is not the greatest or most "expressive" way to paint, but it does show form. So does plan and elevation, so that shows that form is not all we are after 😊

In a more naturalistic style, like these sketches here, make sure that nothing in the shadow is as light as anything in the light, and nothing in the light is as dark

as anything in the shadow. Read that carefully, what I am saying is contrast is your friend. Extreme examples are comic books, but you don't have to go that far. Just don't mix up light and shadow. How do you decide what is in light and shadow? You have to know form and how light works on it. No other way. You get that from life painting and drawing. Reliance on photos to learn this will mess you up down the road.

Then Color, and only then color. And just start with making it all brown or something simple. Then think about relative warms and cools. Warm on the lit side, cool on the shadow side. But it is relative, not screaming orange and ultramarine blue. Then you can get into more subtle things like local color interpreted through tinted light and reflected light, etc. But keep in mind, as you get fancy with the color, should your time be better spent on the drawing? I make this mistake more often than I like to admit 😊

I am not saying that you should separate all these as processes. When I paint a blob that will become a head or a torso, I am thinking about it's length, direction, edge quality, value, color, etc.

I know that is a lot to think about, but you can erase that eye socket, if you analyze it for the above characteristics and it comes up lacking. Do it again, and again or cut the background back over the top, till you get something that is right. Then move on to the next shape.

I had several different classes at the beginning of AC, and all taught totally different approaches to figure drawing. It was really confusing.

Study all highly developed stylizations of the figure, they all refer to the same structure, and it is fascinating seeing the differences in interpretation.

I think that the bias against Hogarth is either the comic (guilt by association) or the mechanical feel of his drawing. It is not what the more sensitive types call "expressive." Hehe...

I had his class. He was a character. His personality might have something to do with it among people who knew him. He thought quite a bit of his

accomplishments, and had VERY strong and bizarre opinions on art and life in general. The morning was spent with him either doing a drawing from scratch, or rambling on about art, and the afternoons were drawing from the model. He would have us start the body by drawing a peanut shape, and adding legs and arms and head. I remember him yelling "draw a peanut! Come on, do it! You know how to draw a peanut, don't you?!???"

There are certain schools that have been around a long time, and they seem to required a few generations to really mature, or even mutate into something else.

My only general advice (look whos talking, mr master drawer here.) is to be careful of imitating a highly developed style at the beginning. It can take you over before you have learned basics well enough. The way say, Disney, artist draw is beautiful and has been very highly refined over the years. You might be tempted to "draw like Disney" (look at the art of _____ Disney movie books). Keep in mind if you were to be taught that style by Disney animators who know what they are doing, they would teach you structure first, and leave the stylizations for later. There is real danger in imitation of the surface effects of this, or any other style.

So learn a structural drawing style first! And whatever you do, don't get into a style that depends of rendering halftones or just rendering in general. Learn structure first!

This has been a hole in my education, and only now do I know enough to realize what should have been different in my earlier development. Don't make the same mistake.

I have tried to explain motivations and interests coming and going in my life, and I have no explanations whatsoever.

I was playing a lot of golf 5 years ago. I got pretty good. If I had continued I could have done it as a profession.

I then lost all interest. Boom.

How do you explain that?

Human beings are not rational by a long shot. You can evaluate rationality in respects to achieving a goal, but once that goal is beyond the basic necessities of life (food, clothing, shelter), motivation becomes very arbitrary and mysterious.

I am pretty deterministic in my view of human nature (I like Mr. Skinner) so I guess I have just not analyzed my interests sharply enough. I am sure that the structure of my brain enjoys the illusion of space on a 2-d surface.

So it's some kind of nervous tick 😊

This is a cover for Return to Castle Wolfenstein. There are a bunch of sketches [here](#). I really hesitate to even post this.

I did a drawing, some of which you can still see in the column capital and here and there. The venom guard is modeled on a screen grab. I did use photo ref for the jacket and head, which is a change for me, and I wish I hadn't.

The sketches feel much more alive. The finish is a dry inventory of objects. I just tried WAY too hard on this. It was not used.







I like the sketches better, but I think getting something like that on a cover is a million to one. It does look like pulp stuff. But that is the way previous wolf covers were done.

The actual composition gave me a lot of trouble, trying to get the figures as large as possible with very limited horizontal space to play with. I would have liked to overlapped things some, but could not. In the preceding comp, the player in really deep in the shadows, but I put that very artificial light on him (my mistake) because I knew he had to be number 1 read. I like him hidden a lot more.

I feel that the vertical format does not work for this composition. I just want to crop it. And the lighting on the figure, required, does not help at all. Shadow would be much better, as in the comp. It looks so artificial as well, the light is positioned so "correctly" it looks quite staged, which feeds into the stiffness problem. As far as the academic aspects of the composition, I really do not know. I try hard not to think about that, as it will really confuse me.





This is inspired by Fan Kuan, one of my favorite artists(schools). Not any image in particular, actually it is not something he would do at all, but not too far from it. I discovered his art as a kid about the same time as I found the Hudson River school painters. It is a neat contrast, given the similar philosophical underpinnings.

There was another thread where I asked an French academic apologist whether he thought western art was superior to eastern art because, well, those toes just look so juicy. (Check it out, I swear B had a foot Fetish, no joke. Not that it matters, mind you) Well, he took the bait and answered, yes, western art is indeed better than eastern.

Sometimes I feel like hanging up my brushes, no my membership in the human race when I hear things like this.

Lunatique, I think that contrast is a more readily understood depth cue, it appears that way even when you look straight at something in the distance. The narrow depth of field in some photos is really the province of photos, as are very long or wide lenses.

Edges can be used as well, but I like to have a full complement of edges in the foreground to play with.

But be careful of these rules. Sometimes it is fun to make a picture work while breaking them on purpose. Remember the pirate pic I did with the head backlit against the grate with sunlight coming through? The head, being backlit, was pretty low in contrast, but what was behind him had a lot of activity. What made that work, if I remember (or not work!) was that the silhouette of the figure was strong against the geometric pattern of the grate.

So there, I broke my own rule, hehe.

Did I answer your question? Contrast is a better tool than focus or edge quality, in general, IMHO. Use both.

This is also characteristic of a style of painting. The Chinese painters you posted in that other thread clearly flatten out things with contrast and edges.

You should be a little more thorough in smudging out the watermarks from the photo first.

People have gotten yelled at before around here for this kind of thing, but the only time I could see a problem is if it is represented as something that it is not.

But you would probably get more out of it if you drew it freehand (without tracing) and then did not use the photo in the final image at all. That way you have to observe and interpret and execute it all yourself.

It can be a good exercise in seeing and playing the difference in edges- if you look at the nose, the hardest edge of all is the inside portion of the shape of the nostril. Make that a little harder than you see it, if that is your subject. Then find the softest, and make that a little softer. Then rank the rest of them the way you see them in between these two extremes.



Edges area lot like values in that they are relative to each other. Like a high-key or low-key painting, all the values exist in a range that relate to one another. Same with edges.

Most of the matte painters that I have seen work use massive amounts of reference, some cannot paint if they are not under a projector (!) Even some big names.

I think this is way too far out on the God side of things (nothing to start with) for a beginning. Most matte artists do simpler stuff at first and then gradually increase the amount of stuff they make up. A really simple set extension would be great to start with, and you learn so much. But something like this there are just way too many unknowns that you cannot even start reasoning with something that you know to be true.

Maybe it is just my own weariness of the matte thing that I would suggest doing something more original, and I know that suits your sensibility as well. Find some good photography and do something to it, but no futuristic cityscapes, please! I can't help with that, I will become ill.

In the old days at ILM, the budgets of a lot of these shows allowed the model shop to make incredible models for the matte artists. Then they were photographed and printed up as big as you wanted. So if it exists, find a photo. If it doesn't build a model. 3-d has taken over from the model shop, I guess.

As you get more experience, you will need less and less ref, but you are taking more of a chance that way. Most beginning matte artists need precise ref, and even use it by projecting and copying shapes. As you get better, ref is still very welcome, but it does not have to be precise, and you can interpret things a lot more. Things and lighting situations I have done a lot of I can wing it pretty OK. The ID background has really helped being able to reason through why things photograph the way they do.

The kind of thought process you use is very good! That is the way you have to think.

Day for night stuff always sticks out for me, film reacts differently near the bottom than it does in the middle. At night, unless it is a time exposure, you

can't get middle values to expose correctly along with the highlights. The exposure latitude is even narrower in the dark. but even if it is a time exposure, the lights blow out and it ends up looking like a day shot with the red and green components missing.

So overall, if you were photographing this, you might get the highlights on the water, the lighter rocks facing upwards, and not a lot else. Too much contrast and information in the wrong areas are the biggest giveaways about a matte.

Also the light bloom stops pretty abruptly in midframe. That fog is very homogenous, and if it isn't, it is not following the moon in a big ball.

Think about the values on the lit areas of the house and lighthouse. The local value is dark and matte on the house roof, so it should not be reacting to the light the same as the much lighter rocks. Reflective surfaces and the angle of the viewer and the light complicates this a bit but you get the idea that it needs thinking about. Also be very very very precise about the shape of the highlight on the lighthouse. it is a high contrast area that tells so much about form and surface, and is very small. So even in a fast sketch, this really needs to be correct.

So i guess you get the idea, less information (cool!) but the information you do include should be more careful. Would take the same time.

Craig Mullins Masterclass questions

During the lecture you were commenting on looking and studying abstract work to increase your knowledge base for your palette of ideas and approaches to work. I honestly have not put enough emphasis on studying as many artist labeled as abstract (beyond the abstraction of what Sargent etc. would fall under as talked about in your lecture) to the detriment of my work, particularly after seeing your demo and seeing the direct relation between the works. Can you throw out some names of artist which some one such as myself may start looking into to expand my basis of exposure?

Hmmm, I like Diebenkorn a lot, as you might have guessed. I'm not sure, however, that you should limit yourself to human artists. I saw a bug splatter on my windshield that was utterly fascinating. I got out the macro lens. Speaking of, micro photography, electron microscope photography are all fascinating to look at. Not just in two dimensions but three dimensions as well. Look at every artist you can get your hands on, every kind of imagery and idea. Beauty is where you find it.

Thank you for sharing your ideas with us. I have the same issues with music BTW.

Do you ever trash a painting after hours of work only to start again? How often does this happen? Do you start with a quick study?

Who is your favorite artist?

Do you ever trash a painting after hours of work only to start again? How often does this happen? Do you start with a quick study?

Absolutely! Going through the process from beginning to end many times helps in general but it really helps with a specific idea/image. Starting over, while expensive, is the best way to make something better.

The quick study might be of the whole image or part of it or it might not be quick and all. It might become the final image if everything goes well.

Who is your favorite artist?

That is impossible to say. I don't really think along those lines.

Hey Craig,

Loved the videos! Very informative .Its was great to hear about your art philosophies.

I have a few questions for you. Although, they are more technical in nature than what your videos presented.

the thumbnail painting you have as your header (the one with the indian king with the army behind him) is absolutely stunning! Could you talk about your thoughts on the relationship of Hue and Saturation as it pertains to light and shadow? I have been painting for a few years now and my paintings ,especially ones done without much reference, suffer from muddy or odd looking shadows. The shadows in your paintings always look so lively and the information I have received thus far has been conflicting. Any help would be greatly appreciated 😊

I promise to have some more questions for you that relate directly to your videos in the next few days 😊

Scott, please post a painting that you think has this problem. Anything I say otherwise might be a little abstract.

One thought about lighting- most foundation art courses teach a 123 approach to value. Separate your lights and darks and don't mix them up. This is a great way to start but I think that you can move on from there. Don't get it in your mind that this is the only way to do things. If you don't separate your values like this a lot of people will say it doesn't read. Nonsense! Look at HDR imagery. Does it read? Of course!

Maybe the way to look at it is you still have separation between light and dark but the darks are limited only to ambient occluded areas. It's a way of lighting things that works for finished imagery but not so much for sketches. Sketches tend to need larger and more simple areas of contrast.

But this is getting the way ahead of ourselves. Post what you have and I will comment on that.

-How often do you read, watch documentaries, videos, etc. to get more information about what you are painting?

All the time!

-Is it most important during the process or after the process?

Definitely before

-Do you normally watch videos/read material regularly?

I like to read a lot. If I won the lottery I would just sit and read all the time.

-Or does it depend on the matters of the client and how fast they need it?

This is something I have trouble getting clients to understand sometime. How long did that sketch take? they will ask... About an hour of painting and about a week of it churning in my head...

-From when you were a student then to a professional, what was your breakthrough moment?

My worked ILM for brief and shining moment. That was a kick!

-When you first started in the industry, how did you deal with deadlines?

Fear of starvation is a wonderful motivator. I would get a job and do it right away. Now I take as much time as I am given because I always might come up with a better idea.

-What was your inspiration as far as mastering your craft--and to get to that next level?

To me learning is fun everything else is work, so as much as getting better is related to learning I don't really need extra motivation.

-Do you have any more suggestions as far as 'smart practicing' as opposed to mindless practicing?

Hmm, good question... Be honest about what is weak in your art, or rather what you would like to see improved and work very hard on that. I feel my weakness has always been drawing so I work on that as hard as I can. And as I pointed out in the videos, really work at it. Turn off the music and focus.

whether it be from life and/or a photo...

-What is a typical day for you (when you have a deadline & when you don't)? How do you find that balance between your family and work?

You asked 😊

My day:

noon- arise, have some cereal

12:30- go outside, take care of house and yard, play with kids

5:30- come inside, help with kids/dinner

7:30 take a freakin nap

9:00 go to work

6:00 go to bed

Repeat.

-Is there any way you can post the final image of the tutorial you did?

Yes, but it will take a few days. Computer troubles 😞

Hi again!

So, the first Q's:

- I noticed that you paint very organically. When you are doing an illustration (or for example, the particular one you did during the demo), do you already have a set idea for the "narrative" and composition in your mind already? Or the story and composition develop as you go along?

- You seem to paint in a very glazing manner. Do you achieve that by setting your wacom pen sensibility to a very hard mode, or it comes more from a more calm state of being and very subtle hand movement?

- Taking to heart your lesson about sketching alot and trying out new ways of doing things, as well as breaking the rules, what was the value you saw on starting by going straight to "detailing" (the girl's head and shoulders) in the beginning of the piece?

- Could you describe in detail of the process you went through to get into the industry? In terms of social skills, getting yourself known, etc?

For now that's it. I'm sure I'll bombard you with more in the following week 🍷

Thanks again for sharing your knowledge with the world!

The demo that I did had some restrictions on it. It was fairly planned out ahead of time, because like I said in the other thread, this is more similar to a commercial job than a personal one. You guys really want to see me flop around for 10 hours? Do six paintings, mix and match, worry and whine? 😊 So I kind of worked it out ahead of time.

I remember I did a demo at an Gnomon workshop that was a little more realistic in that I did change my mind a lot. At the end of the set time I did not have much to show for it. Some people "got it" others felt ripped off.

I do have my Wacom set so that most of its sensitivity happens at light settings. But this is something I really might play with. Reverse it and forced myself to use it. I might come up with something different.

I started detailing that image on purpose because it was exactly the wrong thing to do 😊 It's a process I have seen some easel painters do and I thought I might try it out. It is not generally how I work, then as you must know by now there is no generally. But that being said, it is useful to sometimes have an accurate shape that you can relate other shapes to. This doesn't necessarily mean detail, it could be an accurate blob that shows the torso in relation to the head. Precision doesn't necessarily mean detail.

The industry as it exists now is a totally different animal than it was when I started. I'm not sure I can help much here. I have a pathological aversion to marketing and advertising. I put up my website in about 97 and I've had enough work to keep me going. If I had a more outgoing personality (more than a little Aspergery 😊) I would've loved to try to be a production designer or even a director of films. But a man's got to know his limitations 😊

Hi Mr Mullins I am a big fan of yours and thank you for doing these classes!

I enjoyed your painting demo very much - at the end though you say that you have not worked that way in years. I would be very interested to learn more about how you might have handled that (or any project) from start to finish as

an actual current assignment.

--I use to do a lot of digital sketches(hundreds) for fun very similar to the one in the demo. Now, the time I would've been putting into those I put into traditional media. I guess what I said but I had work that way in a while I specifically meant trying to make a presentable sketch in about an hour. I think right now I see more value for myself in trying to get it right the matter how long it takes. That makes sketching far easier and better, at least for me.

I would really like to know how you sketch for projects, how many you might do for a client and at what level of finish the sketches are completed at.

--This varies quite a bit. Sometimes they're quite a bit rougher than the demo I did. Nær use working on something that the client wouldn't like. But I would think about what I was going to do and research it as much as I could before I started. For instance in the demo I did, I probably what have looked at snow and trees a lot, thought about the composition more,etc. It probably wouldn't have been such an improvisation.

Once you have the sketch decided upon do you paint on top of the sketch or just start painting directly as you did in the demo (assuming then that the sketch only serves as a reference)?

--I almost always start over. As I pointed out in the lecture, there might be some things that I did with the sketch but I would be fighting throughout the whole process, notably lots of contrast in the wrong places. It's easier then having a lot of semi correct information yelling at me and I have to figure out what is working and what is not.

As a second question, you have amazing cinematic qualities to your work in terms of color and contrast usage in a way very few artists seem to achieve. They often look like they could be movie stills. I was wondering if you have any specific tips or advise on how you achieve that? Do you take shots from movies with the dramatic color and lighting you want to achieve and then use them as a references?

--I think cinematographers are artists in their own right. They probably have influenced me as much as traditional art. I don't really use them as direct references, but probably what you're seeing it is sometimes I will use the

classic cinematography setups. It's kinda fun. Also game developers our huge movie fans and are constantly referencing film in many ways. So they seem to like this look as well.

Hi Craig,

Its good to see you come out more this year, and thank you for sharing some of your approaches towards work as an artist.

Would appreciate some of your thoughts on the following.

Wrist speed & RSI: I noticed, that there is variance in the strokes, some deliberate, some more fluid. Which leads to me to wonder - does this method of variance of wrist speed - help prevent RSI. And have you had incidences in the past where you have had to stop work for a few weeks due to this. Lastly, are there any useful tips you have found to be conducive/optimal to allow for good longstanding power for regular daily painting.

Sketching: When given a client brief, would you use your preliminary sketch (or given client drawing) as a base, and work over the top or start anew for the final, with reference to the sketch

Personal vs Client Work vs Homelife: Would appreciate a glimpse into your work ethic and approach towards a balance of personal work vs production work and family life. Would you allocate portions of the year for an art sabbatical, and on a daily basis, would you be able to find time for more personal work/sketching.

Personally, I find the best times to do so, is to wake up early at 5am and paint/draw fo a good 2-3 hours prior to starting work.

Many thanks!

Chee

--Wrist speed & RSI:

I have never had any problem with my wrists. I remember a time around 99 where everyone that I knew who used a tablet was in a cast. A few years later and ever since I haven't heard of anybody having this problem. You're the first and a long while 😊 Drawing with a tablet is far less hard on your hands and wrists than a lot of other occupations. The only thing I might suggest is to set the tablet sensitivity to high.

--Sketching: When given a client brief

I almost always start over. As I pointed out in the lecture, there might be some things that I did with the sketch but I would be fighting throughout the whole process, notably lots of contrast in the wrong places. It's easier than having a lot of semi correct information yelling at me and I have to figure out what is working and what is not.

--Personal vs Client Work vs Homelife:

I like to get a balance of all three in each day. Each will not stand neglect for longer than that. It also breaks up today nicely. When I am working on commercial jobs I might work for a couple hours and then take 15 minutes to sketch or draw the way I would like. Right now, I go to a life drawing twice a week religiously. It helps with everything so much. I do however miss my nap 😊

--Personally, I find the best times to do so, is to wake up early at 5am and paint/draw for a good 2-3 hours prior to starting work.

I think that sounds like a good idea. Get it into the daily schedule!

Hi Craig,

Firstly thank you very much for taking the time to provide us with an insight into your design philosophies and work flow.

I'd be interested to know how you balance your time between working with traditional media and painting in a purely digital format. As a commercial artist I tend to work predominantly with digital, at times it seems like it'd almost be too easy to spend ones entire working life about 2ft from a monitor!

From a technical point of view I noticed your brush list in Photoshop was quite streamlined. Do you try and keep the number of brushes in your list limited to a certain number or do you have different groups to tackle different subject matter?

Are there any books or films you feel that have played a crucial role in shaping the artist you've become and the subject matter you choose to paint?

You talked about the expectations on commercial artists to continually produce artwork to a certain spec and quality. Being as well known as you are, do you feel pressure to live up to the expectations placed upon you by clients and dare I say it, your fans? Do you think this tempers your work in anyway? The battle to deliver a tried and tested formula Vs the urge to experiment? How do you deal with these expectations and pressures?

Thank you very much for your time and thanks again for a wonderful insight into your working practices.

All the best

Nick

From a technical point of view I noticed your brush list in Photoshop was quite streamlined. Do you try and keep the number of brushes in your list limited to a

certain number or do you have different groups to tackle different subject matter?

-I find that I generally use a small number of brushes, for better or worse. And my lecture on contrast I tried to make the case for varying the use of brushes to keep the I entertained and I do try to do that. But I do end up falling into the same trap that I warn about, and that is painting too long with one brush. I don't have a separate set of brushes for different kinds of painting. I've noticed also that a lot of painter users tend to have a dozen or so favorite brushes. It is a matter of practicality as well.

Are there any books or films you feel that have played a crucial role in shaping the artist you've become and the subject matter you choose to paint?

-Probably my well worn Sargent and Syd Mead books!

You talked about the expectations on commercial artists to continually produce artwork to a certain spec and quality. Being as well known as you are, do you feel pressure to live up to the expectations placed upon you by clients and dare I say it, your fans? Do you think this tempers your work in anyway? The battle to deliver a tried and tested formula Vs the urge to experiment? How do you deal with these expectations and pressures?

-This is a real problem. It kind of runs me nuts. But as I said, when doing commercial work the client expects what they have seen before and I will be pretty conservative. As much as I try to experiment I feel that the work all looks like mine. That is when I'm trying to break. I can make a good or original but rarely both. That takes time!

1. When your stuff started to get attention and noticed, how do you stop worrying: if your stuff were meeting people's and ur personal expectations and just enjoy painting and creating?

-to a certain extent it has destroyed my enjoyment of it. I really am no longer free. Sad but true. But I suppose it beats the alternative 😊

2. Are there any form of music u prefer listening to while painting? (to combat boredom and fatigue and increase your overall productiveness). Does listening to music while painting make you more or less productive?

As I pointed out in the lecture, I used to listen to music, but now I prefer silence. I really try to concentrate and not zone out.

3. I admire your style of painting and its traditional look to it and I like to achieve speed paintings with similar sketchy but detailed quality. I noticed you have a very consistent speed painting style in most of your work. Do you have trouble maintaining this style of painting when your client request for more finished and polished work?

No, not really. When you have a lot of experience it is easier to come up with a certain level of finish in a given period of time. Meaning it is easier to fine tune. Or you could say I paint just as loosely but at a finer scale.

4. Do u often paint without a pre-conceived plan? and just allow your brush to wander and see where it goes from there? is this productive or counter-productive to the learning process?

I work in as many different ways as I can conceive of. I consciously change my process continually.

5. How do u interpret reference? Have u ever seen a photo and be inspired to recreate a similar scene? or do u mainly stress on using your mind to think and imagine an original scene while only using reference as backup?

Early on in the Photoshop painting days when everyone was learning what it could do I did do more painting straight from photos. It was a way of eliminating one variable. Now that kind of thing bores me to tears. Please watch the lecture. I think I did a whole section on this issue.

6. After spending a couple of hours painting something, do u have any fear of ruining the image further if u continue? do u then approach cautiously? I would like to be able to enjoy painting without fear of making it worse after I see some nice progress,do u have a solution?

If it's personal work I set it aside. If it's commercial work and I have run out of time there's not much I can do. But there really is no reason for caution -this is one of the great things about digital painting. Save a version of the final every 10 minutes if you're worried. Digital art has so many shortcomings but this is a clear advantage-use it.

7. I love being adaptable to change the image i'm working on,but sometimes i feel a slight amount of attachment to it.In your personal opinion are you attached to an image you are painting and do u attempt to break it?

Like in writing, if you see something that you particularly like, somewhere where you really nailed it, paint it out. Once it is an accident, twice, you learn something. Don't fall in love with your paintings, you'll get fat and happy in your improvement curve will flatten out.

8. Do u have a solution when u feel uninspired or uncreative? Or do u just pick up ur tablet stylus and doodle anyway?

There is an aspect that is creative but also a large part is craft. If you feel uninspired for while work on the craft. But when you are doing commercial work you don't have that choice. Pick up the pen and get to work.

9. Did the commercial and industry world affect the way you paint today?

Very much so. And I am fascinated but I can't turn off that influence what I want to. Be careful about what you let into your head. You'll be painting

gigantic shiny wet boobs against your better judgment and you not really sure why 😊

First off, thank you so much for the information you shared with us all here. It's amazing and you make it look so simple! I suppose that's where all the practice comes in!

You mentioned how people who excel in painting can have difficulty with drawing and vice versa... I happen to be one of the ones that has always had difficulty with painting. I've been drawing since I could hold a pencil but painting has always eluded me for some reason. With traditional media, I normally ended up with more paint on me than on the canvas! I've found that using a tablet and a stylus has given me a more natural, "drawing" feel when I attempt to paint, but it's still definitely not my strong suit.

Everyone else has asked most of the questions I initially came up with after watching your videos. Your technique here was so freeform and organic. I really loved it. I do wonder though, when working in this nature, how do you determine where your light source is, or do you let the values determine that and just go with the flow?

hmmm, unlike you setting up a value structure has always come a lot easier than drawing. Maybe play with a 3d package and look at how ambient inclusion or final gather renders look. Don't think about key light first. I know that that is backwards but sometimes it helps a lot. The ambient light will determine so much of what an image is. Is it light or dark, a color cast? Where is it coming from? Maybe have the key light and where it is coming from and what qualities it has in the back of your mind because that light bouncing around can create a

lot of ambient light.

The first class I had at an art center was how light works on basic shapes. That class was worth as much as all the other classes put together.

When you are experimenting with your sketches, How much emphasis do you place on exploring color ideas, before approaching working on the stage of working for the final piece, and how do deadlines effect this approach for you?

Digital is great for this because it is so fast and flexible that you can try out a lot of different things quickly. If I was working traditionally time might limit what I can explore. But as the thousands of hours of painting have piled up I can see things in my head before I paint them. But that doesn't mean that I have a preconceived notion all the time and will fight to get that on to the image. It is a dialog.

I do try to spend as much time as possible getting the basic stuff as refined as I can. Rather, I don't say let's get this block in crap out of the way so I can start detailing. Quite the opposite.

Finished as a strange idea. As others have said there is a difference between commercial and personal work. Commercial work, well, yes when you've run out of time it's done 😊

With personal work I will often work on it over a long period-sometimes months. I have a folder that has about 500 images in various states of completion. They all need something, just not sure what. When I look through that folder sometimes I will see an image and the solution will pop out at me. "That's what was bothering me about that!" Sometimes an image will stay in there forever and eventually I will just delete it.

Yes sometimes an image will go on a completely different direction than what I had originally thought. Sometimes I'll have a bunch different versions and I will work each one along its own path.

This is one of the reasons why it has been difficult for me to make a DVD showing my "process." That process changes all the time and is not linear in any way.

Commercial work has to be more linear because it has to be more reliable and on a schedule. I might start with a drawing or simple 3d model. To make things more reliable I generally will try to break the process up into discrete steps. There are fewer variables in play at one time. It's not as fun, or difficult, and doesn't lead to as many interesting conclusions, but it is more reliable. It's like long division, break it down into simple steps.

What Wong mentioned, "when there is no more room for detail" I think is not the right way to look at it. Most problems I see in my work are errors made at the very beginning. If you are working on something and you say to yourself "maybe a little more detail over here..." this is probably not the problem. Sometimes, but not usually. That's why I like to look at the thumbnails after a while and I will see the problems when I have a fresh eye. Usually it's drawing problems. Ever had a painting that goes together easily and doesn't require a lot of detail? That's what you're after. The bones of it, the drawing are correct.

McCue, yeah, I'm not sure what the names of the brushes are, but they come with PS. I would not worry that much about "the right brushes". The interest comes from using different brushes, individually quite boring, but used together make interesting things.

You have to know the rules to break them, but learning them might be unconscious as well as conscious, so breaking them becomes almost impossible. Be careful what you learn!

When you are setting up your paint space:

1. Types and number of brushes?

You can see from the demo what my brushes are. I do try to keep them somewhat organized. They're basically stock brushes that come with Photoshop. I do have a few specialty brushes, but not many. I probably should spend more time playing with the brush engine. It's just that it's seems more technical and less painting. But my bad for not doing it. In painter I feel that 90% of my time goes into wrestling the hundreds of variables of the brushes to get it to do the simplest thing.

2. Do you set up a color palate ahead of time? I ask because I sometimes find myself hindered (when in the flow) by switching brush and color etc..? Maybe there's an easier/better way?

I sometimes will have an oil painting document open and pick colors from that. When the painting itself has enough color complexity I will pick directly from the image.

Sometimes when you're working with big shapes at first and trying to see forms emerge the tendency is to move too quickly. I really have this problem. I think working this way can cause a little bit of anxiety and you tried to latch onto the first thing that appears. Soon afterward, the detailing starts and you are committed. Try to spend more time on the bigger picture before you start with secondary and subtle forms. Or, you could use this image as a study and paint another one. Really try to work out the design both from a compositional standpoint and the functional aspects of what your painting. With that blocked in keep on asking yourself what can I do at this stage to make this a stronger image? The only answer you are not allowed it is "more detail." If it's personal work, take as much time as you need. If it's late at night and your staring at it and use can't think of what else you can do, set it aside and ask yourself the same question tomorrow.

Hi Craig,

Love your tutorial very much, thanks for taking the time to do this and thanks gnomon for setting this up. It's great to be here. I really wanted to ask something intelligent (if I can think of any, haa) but i guess, alot of the important points are already highlighted in your tutorial and alot of the answer boils down to trying, practising more and observing more. I'm not sure if it's too much to ask but it will be great if you could share with us a process for a piece from how you create the sketch, the mental process, and develop it into something as detail as the persian looking piece that is showcase on the top (How do you approach when you look for references and what do you look for when you are detailing and polishing up the piece.)

Many Thanks,

Cheers

Ray

Here is the initial sketch for that image. The client requested that it be widened out. There is not a lot of reference for this time period. In the end of a lot of it is fantasy. After the sketch was approved, I did some simple modeling to get this somewhat unusual perspective correct. The shapes that the armies make are not very intuitive. This helps sell the image quite a bit. The original is 10,000 pixels wide and that helped get some important things exactly where they belong. I have the most problem with the elephant. What does he look like from that angle and with that lighting? Pretty tough. Don't think I pulled it off really. Is there a difference between an African and an Indian elephant? Yes!



Hello Craig, I love your work it's truly inspirational and worth of worship. I have a question though:

How do you get/gather the reference material for your work, do you use stocks, libraries, books, magazines, google, all the previous ones, and what do you think is the best approach or methodology for this?

I don't think there's a bad place to get reference. Well let me backtrack a bit. If you are going to use the reference closely morally and legally it should be your photography. There are so many ways to use photography. from simple documentation of the nature of something to photo manip. Try them all, figure out when to use them. Some clients REALLY want the photo look. Oblige them. Just be careful of the rights of the photographer!

Hi Craig, thanks for taking the time to put this out. I really appreciate it.

Got a few questions:

Recently I've been told that I push way too much black into my drawings/paintings and it muddies everything up; so I've been trying to re-think how I approach value without using all the black.

So far the results are fairly weak, washed out experiments that need heavy adjustments to get a good foundation to build on.

Whats your take on what I'm trying to do and how would you approach setting down a good value pattern?

I really found the painting demo fascinating and I hope you do more of them (*wink wink*nudge nudge *say-no-more-say-no-more).

The warm tones in the background you were originally upset with, why were you upset with them? Were they too much of a focus?

The warm rim light on the archer you seemed to dislike, how else would you have tackled this to make it less "cheesecake"? -'cause if rimlight is cheesy I'm king of cheese-town. I probably use that sort of thing to define form WAY too much.

I noticed you did the arrow, said you didn't like it, yet never went back to it again. Overall I found you bounce around the image a lot and while I know that's a good thing I find it too easy to get hung up on details, especially details I don't like. So what kept you loose and not hung up on a detail you think could be better?

Anyways thanks again for the lesson. Like I said, I hope you do more of these in the future. I'll stay tuned.

~Matt

Hi Matt,

Here is a very ugly paint over that is really only to show how you can still have light and color in a "low key" image. You have to be careful of how much contrast is in shadow areas, you can push it too far like I did. But hopefully it shows you a way to get out of the "black shadow" problem using an image that you know well.

On the demo I did not like the arrow because as a shape, it was far too strong. A long, thin rectangle with that was in high contrast to the BG value, no variation in edge at all. It looked like exactly what it was, a line spammed in there. I should have gone back and done it with more thought.

I suppose the problem is "but that is what an arrow is!" If there was a bird flying through the image, would you see that as well? It looks staitic, it would be moving, and therefore be a much softer shpae. I would soften the edges in the middle, play up the arrowhead, anything to keep it entertaining. Play up differences!



Matt B.

Chow #178



- You had said that you struggled with drawing and that animation was a useful tool to learn drawing. You seem to be a lot like me; color came naturally while draughtsmanship is a constant struggle. Can you elaborate any more on the matter?

I think it may have something to do with our natural inclination or talent. We do what comes naturally and we get better at it. What is difficult we avoid. When I decided to become an illustrator I was in my mid twenties that had never drawn the figure before. I made a conscious decision to try to make that weakness into a strength. I think I'm barely competent now, enough that it doesn't get in the way of other things. I think animation is a great way to think because it deals with forms and a simplified and intelligent way. From there, it is simple to light them and it add sub forms if necessary. And illustrators way of drawing that emphasizes shape is not very useful when you have to draw from your head. Sculpture is also a great way to learn how to draw a better. Understand the forms, understand how light works on the forms, that makes shapes. Paint those shapes.

- During the demo you'd said that you haven't worked this way in several years. Is there any difference now in your current workflow than there is in the demo?

What I meant was sitting down with an hour and painting a free association manner. Now, I might paint is simply, but I would take the time to get it right as much as I could. I wouldn't say it's just a sketch.

Hello Craig,

Thank you for participating and sharing your thoughts 😊!

I'm not really sure how to ask this ^^ . It has been almost three years now I got really interested in making art, getting my ideas on paper and it has been a though but fun road. Most of the time I studied perspective, anatomy, doing color and photo studies,... Sometimes I drew from imagination to see what I've learned and then I stared to study again the things I think could be better. Nowadays I also started doing live drawings of people while sitting in the train, bus, school,...

But I was wondering, how your "first" steps in art looked like. Was it similar or not at all? It's just, I get much motivation hearing from other artist how they experience, yeah you know, their "road" 😊. I hope you don't mind.

I was also wondering I could share some drawings with you to get some advice, any kind of advice? I have the feeling I keep running in circles, that I'm not improving.

I you can find some time, some work can be found here (<http://linodriegheart.com/index.html>).

If you want to see some more work, it would be great If you could take a look at this sketchbook (<http://www.conceptart.org/forums/showthread.php?t=108183>).

Of course other people are welcome to give some crits/tips/thoughts. I think we are all here to learn 😊.

I hope you don't mind and thanks in advance!
Lino

I think you're off to a good start. There's not much specifically I can say. From here I think you need to work more and be more precise. And by precise I do NOT mean more detail. You are simplifying forms and shapes well, but ask yourself how to make them better, more descriptive, better designed, more organized, more clear. Listen again to the lecture on differences. Work more on your drawing. The simpler something is, or rather the more you have simplified it, the more precise it has to be, because that's all that's there! Read the Sargent notes on my site where he talks about getting the relationship of the head and the torso precisely correct. Apply this idea to all that you do. "Loose, simple, painterly" does not mean imprecise at all!

Hi there, Mr. Mullins. Thank you very much for the tutorials. A lot of information I couldn't even think about before so it was very useful.

Here is my question:

- My images are often too "still" or too "technical". Even though I started the

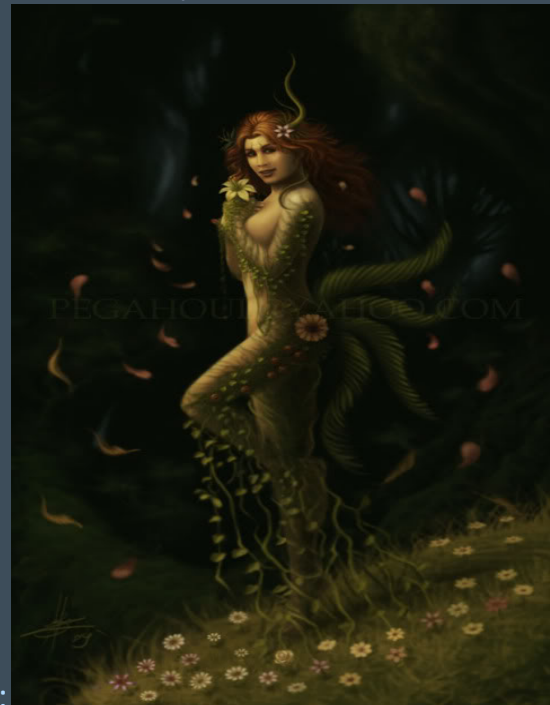
sketch pretty flexible with a lot of exaggeration and not too realistic, I end up finishing it as something realistic and still, as if the characters are posed to be in that position instead of something that was naturally captured.

Lately this makes me fear finishing a painting because it tend to lost that natural feeling of the sketch. Do you have any suggestion around this?

I do some life drawing on the street and the speed of it made me practice capturing the important forms, but after I polish it, it end up looking still anyway. Maybe I overdid it but I don't know when to stop without it look "unfinished"

Here are a couple of images to show what I meant. Maybe you can give me suggestions on what I missed or what I can improve.

(I tried using the attachments but always disconnected)



Example of sketch that I feel pretty flexible:



<http://i13.photobucket.com/albums/a2...bypegahoul.jpg>

Example of finished work that looks very still:

<http://i13.photobucket.com/albums/a2...byPegahoul.jpg>

<http://i13.photobucket.com/albums/a2...ypegahoulw.jpg>

That's it for now. I'll ask again when something comes to mind. Thank you very

much for your time!
-Peter

I think if your values were more carefully considered you wouldn't feel the need as you are working to eliminate every brush stroke. If you working on something that isn't coming out well, the first reflex is too often continue to refined the detail. Sometimes this works out just fine. But most of the time something more basic is wrong. In the painting that I did the paint over of you are spreading your values everywhere, every tiny form has a full range of values from black to white. In the paint over I did I decided what was going to be the lightest light and darkest dark. This decision was based on both what I considered to be the actual lighting and forms present in the image but also where I wanted the eye to go. The way you have the lighting set up now that female character is only receiving ambient and bounce lighting. Also the top plane of her knees with that white material would probably be the lightest light. Maybe you could move the light around to better show off subject. But that's getting off track for what I'm trying to say here. For instance I might not choose an entirely symmetrical composition, but again that it's your choice.

Back to values since I think that is what your question really is about. I did start out with the tan color of the background and glazed values carefully away from the middle tone. When things started to read a little bit, I saw I only had to go very dark and very light in a few key places. Also by not going to the extremes of the value range, you can keep saturation in your colors, a big plus. In a low to middle key image like this the low contrast glazing that starts the image can be left alone to form shadow areas once you have worked up the light areas. It's already low contrast so it will work just fine for shadow. Just a few accent dark here and there are all you need.

Listen to my lecture on playing up differences. This is a good example. Look at the books on the left of the image on the table. The vertical plane of the pages has the same value as the white top plane of the dress. There are about 10 factors that should tell you that the book should be darker than the dress. Differences!

The division between light and dark, meeting shape design, is a bit muddy. I

don't think you have a clear conception of what the forms are, therefore you cannot light them convincingly. Try to commit to what is and light and shadow with strong shapes. Even if they're a bit wrong they will be graphically interesting. I think that is what is carrying your Manga art, better drawing, more convincing the shapes. Try to think that way in your painting as well, the only difference is you're not using line.





Hey Craig,

Loved the videos! Very informative .Its was great to hear about your art philosophies.

I have a few questions for you. Although, they are more technical in nature than what your videos presented.

the thumbnail painting you have as your header (the one with the indian king with the army behind him) is absolutely stunning! Could you talk about your thoughts on the relationship of Hue and Saturation as it pertains to light and shadow? I have been painting for a few years now and my paintings ,especially ones done without much reference, suffer from muddy or odd looking shadows. The shadows in your paintings always look so lively and the information I have received thus far has been conflicting. Any help would be greatly appreciated 😊

I promise to have some more questions for you that relate directly to your videos in the next few days 🙏

Scott, please post a painting that you think has this problem. Anything I say otherwise might be a little abstract.

One thought about lighting- most foundation art courses teach a 123 approach to value. Separate your lights and darks and don't mix them up. This is a great way to start but I think that you can move on from there. Don't get it in your mind that this is the only way to do things. If you don't separate your values like this a lot of people will say it doesn't read. Nonsense! Look at HDR imagery. Does it read? Of course!

Maybe the way to look at it is you still have separation between light and dark but the darks are limited only to ambient occluded areas. It's a way of lighting things that works for finished imagery but not so much for sketches. Sketches tend to need larger and more simple areas of contrast.

But this is getting the way ahead of ourselves. Post what you have and I will comment on that.

Thanks for the response. Here are two paintings of mine that I feel have the "muddy shadows" syndrome. I'm not sure if its a value problem I'm having , although it could be, but more of problem of Hue/Saturation relationship in the light and darks. However, Ill defer to your expert knowledge. Any other suggestions are welcome too!



Scott, I think I would not worry about colour and muddy shadows, but rather the basic forms, how light works on those forms, and the consequent shapes that are created. If you just work in black and white you can't make muddy colors 😊 but if the shapes are not well designed and descriptive with meaningful edges, it will give the impression of muddiness.

As an example, look at your sketch of the Bavarian castle. Do not make it any more detailed than it is, but can you make what is there better? And I'm not saying stick more closely to the photograph. Can you use cast shadows to describe form? Should the value range in the near wall be greater than the distant turret? Could you decrease the contrast in the foreground too increase depth? Can you merge and simplify some of the shadow shapes in the architecture to make them more graphically interesting? They will also read the shadows better if they are unified. What area should be the sharpest? Which edge is the most descriptive of the forms you are trying to describe? Play up the differences! What areas are in shadow, dark against dark? None of that really exists in the photograph, but it should exist in your painting.

1. I was wondering if you had any thoughts on keeping the abstract/interesting pattern in illustrations as we develop the painting (taking it from "sketch" to "very finished work"). By the abstract pattern I mean what you touched on in the section on contrast. Once I move further past the lay in, I find myself switching back to the "object-oriented" way of thinking/painting and, for the sake of a better word, I start "cataloging" things. Can you talk about keeping and maintaining the force and excitement of the simple abstract effect alive as we develop the painting (as we develop the form, light, etc)?

That can be pretty tough. It is a habit you have to try to consciously break. It's one of those things that's easy to fall into if you are, say, listening to music. Be aware that you're doing something and stop! Slow down! Then you can go about breaking the habit. The specific problem you are speaking of I can think of an example: say dark hair falling over a dark coat. Your mind says that there are two different things there. But maybe you could afford to lose that edge entirely and make it into one shape. Usually the cataloging problem is painting in edges where you don't really need them, or making them too hard or contrasty. They can still be there, just soften them up a bit.

2) Sargent talked about painting the appearances of things (and I know you said it might've been tongue-in-cheek). It makes sense not painting objects but relationships/shapes and looking at things as a whole when working from life. Do you think it's possible to work this way from imagination?

Yes, but it takes a long time. The cataloging problem is very difficult to overcome at first when working from the imagination.

But on the other side of things I have talked a lot about painting things that are really visible. For instance, there are important landmarks on the body that are sometimes visible and sometimes not. Including them can help explain form and its orientation in space.

So here I have contradicted myself-eliminate some edges, paint some that you don't even see. Learning the difference is what takes time. Drawing from life speeds up the learning process.

1. I am guessing that the headline image was a commercial assignment. Is that right?

Yes

2. If there was a 3d model - did you make it or was it provided?

There was a very simple model that I made for the figures. About 20 polys per figure.

3. How long did it take to do the piece?

That's hard to say, as I was working on a bunch of other stuff at the same time. Maybe a week fulltime?

4. Could we see a larger version of the image?

I don't think the client would approve of that. They would not want the possibility of bootleg prints, which has happened!

5. I see you are using blending modes while painting with a brush. How do you use them? Which ones are practical and for what types of things? (I've read the Photoshop help menu and it seems too complicated)

I will very occasionally use them for a specific effect, like fire or deepening contrast in an area quickly. They are a convenience really.

6. Do you really start to work 9pm and work until 6am?

Yes

7. Do you have fun with commercial assignments?

Sometimes

8. Can you tell us on what projects you have worked on lately and in the past couple of years? Are there any that were a particular blast or a complete torture?

I'd rather not say, don't want to offend anybody 😊

9. Can you show some of your more recent works?

I might get around to updating goodbrush one of these days. Maybe

10. Are your original traditional pieces going to be available for sale again?

I sold a few a year and 1/2 ago because work was a little slow when the world stopped. But my normal commercial work has picked up greatly since then and I don't really have time to deal with that. I felt uncomfortable selling those things because they really weren't very good. I just haven't been able to put the time into traditional media to get it to a reasonable professional level.

I think I sold three paintings on Ebay? The last painting the person who bought it ended up destroying it, and then telling me he did, for some reason. This doesn't make me very enthusiastic about continuing 😞

-What do you recommend as far as books(fiction/non-fiction) you really love to read?

I enjoyed James Michener's 'Hawaii', esp the prologue about the formation of the islands. I mostly read non-fiction, about whatever interests me at the moment. Tropical agriculture is an ongoing interest.

-Are you ever going to show the stuff you did for Dreamworks? I am curious to see.

I did some stuff for them a long time ago. It was pretty primitive.

-How did you get into the Feature Film side of things, from Animation to video games, etc.?

Im not really in the feature film side of things, Im not in the Union, and each time I work for a production it is kind of a disaster. Games has been a better fit.

-It's amazing that you went to Art Center twice, for both ID + Illustration. How did you handle that? was it an easy transition to switch?

Not really, it was difficult eliminating the feeling of ID in my work, I was teased mercilessly for this by the illustrators 😊 (and teachers)

-According to your 'Painting Techniques' section(Misc) on your website, are you

going to be posting 'general articles on painting' anytime soon?

Not really, there is so much good information out there that is freely available and done very well. I don't really know what I could add to that body of knowledge. I often feel I have no business teaching at all.

-When you approach an idea for a environment the same way you would for a figure(s) in an abstract way?

Yes, or rather I would approach a figure as an object in an environment

-What are your favorite foods?

Hmm, I like Indian and Japanese.

-What are your future plans/goals for where you want to take your art? (i.e. teach, sell prints, etc.)

I would love to win the lottery and take 5 years away from art completely. Then see where I am. I might like to try sculpture-the Shiftlett Bros demos were so cool!

Hi Craig,

Any painting (I think) will have moments which are fast, areas that are slow and that variation of speed and weight is very important. However, how do you prevent the (necessary) areas of calm in a painting from looking simply tired or repetitive?

May I ask how you maintain a level of mark making which feels fresh over the lifespan of a piece of work? Do you have several pieces of work on the go simultaneously and move between them to achieve this?

Thank you for your time!

I think you have to simply be aware of it. It is a very conscious thing. You have to be willing to wipe out large areas of even finished detail if it's getting to "precious." But I talked about not listening to music and not getting hypnotized, which is very important.

-when you first approach a piece given to you from a client, and then do research, is there a thought process that your mind typically travels? or patterns that you notice?

Sometimes I know right away what they're after, as they will usually cite other games or movies 😊 But design is a long process and of course you can see the end from the beginning, and where you end up is often a surprise. I like to compose images when I lie down to go to sleep.

-I understand that you try to grab from all sorts of areas for inspiration, landscaping, science, etc- is there anything that you keep going back to? a book or a painting etc..?

I keep on going back to classical painting, which I love.

-you have a lot of mileage, so you know a lot of very efficient ways to accomplish things that otherwise would take longer. (Here, I'm talking about rendering) Was there anything specifically you remembered that you think benefited a lot with rendering? (bargue, cast drawings, long charcoal studies, experiments with the eye-rgb,time

The first class I had at art center was 14 weeks of how light works on basic forms. That was $\frac{3}{4}$ of the value of my art center education. It all starts from there.

I'm often worried about rules seeping into the unconscious and then you can get them out because you don't even know that you are following them. Images must have four sides!

I think an important thing to understand about rules is to figure out why they are rules in the first place. Exactly how does a function? Why is this a rule? If you understand it very well, then you have a much better chance of breaking it or bending it successfully.

Allport, do you mean descriptively as in describing form or some other aspect of the "real" scene? I grant myself total liberty there. If it looks cool, I will figure out why, so i understand it and can use it better in late work.

I remember a matte shot from Aliens 3 that had some out of focus lights dangling in the foreground. Didn't know what they were, but I am glad they were there 😊

Think of painting movement and atmosphere, they are really "there," so you have to paint them.

As you surmised, I do enjoy an image that is abstract and dimensional at the same time, but I think the abstraction is really more descriptive of things than people realize.

Toole, glad you liked it! People abuse and do not value what is free... unfortunately.

Art History is one thing I did not harp on in this lecture, but it is one so important. When I was giving a lecture in Singapore people ask asked me why digital art is not taken seriously. I answered that to a certain degree it is the fault of digital artists not really educating themselves and turning out work that is of little bit more sophisticated. One more image of the bikini clad sword lady with giant speculars on her breasts of sets the cause of digital art being taken seriously back 10 years for each new one that is made 😊 Learning about art history, even learning about the history of digital art, can make your work a lot deeper. Not only can you appreciate masterworks when you know about the context in which they worked(social, political, economic, intellectual) but you can think to yourself a how these factors affect you and the work you're doing now. It's a bit of self awareness.

Your point of Hue shifts is well taken. But think about black and white imagery- how do this function without color?

To get jobs in the "biz" I am afraid that you probably do need to target your portfolio very precisely. Maybe a wider range of work if you are looking for a staff job, but if it is a freelance job, they want to see that you can do exactly what they are after with great reliability. Unfortunate, but risk and success do not go together in the marketplace. So if you want a job, look at images done for a commercial project and set your standards there.

Colors such a huge thing, I hesitate to say anything that would oversimplify, but here goes:

Learn to separate color and value it in your head-there are separate entities, judge them separately: is this the right value? is it the right color? Ask yourself in that order: value, intensity, hue. So what we think of color (hue) is not really as important as you think.

The example you brought up about a colored black and white drawing- it looks this way because there's not a hue shift as the values change. As more photons bounce around, the hue will shift towards the hue of the light source.

Oversimplified, yes.

But really I think you should work intuitively with color, and then when you find something that works, figure out why it works. That is better than learning a whole bunch of rules about color and trying to apply them. Very clumsy.

Sculpture is a great way to learn about form and drawing! The best! I wish I had more time to do it... Probably doing it either way would be good, digital because of the speed and flexibility, traditional because you have to think more before you commit- very similar to the tradeoffs in 2-d.

I think you could get a lot out of copying master paintings. Not studies, approximations, impressions, but precise copies. It will quickly become clear to you the difference between how you work and how they work.

I would really consider going to school somewhere. You can do it alone, I've seen it done, but it is rare and requires a lot of time and/or talent. I don't know what other commitments or responsibilities you may have. If you are a young single person and commit 15 hours a day to working smart and hard, you can do it. What other passions do you have that may interfere with this? Get rid of your TV, I got rid of mine in 91. Best thing I ever did 😊 a high level of commitment over number of years, possibly a decade and you will get there. I think most people that go it alone end up getting discouraged because they are not improving fast enough. Keep in mind that improvement is not a linear progression. Sometimes it is flat for a while before a spike happens. Sometimes, or rather often times, you are exposed to new information and your work takes a nose dive as you are confused and are struggling to incorporate the new information. This is where despair can really set in. And this is where the difference between those who make it and those who don't- the successes keep on working.

There really is so much available online now. I remember when I was in your place we had the art of Star Wars sketchbook and that was about it. Now you have Conceptart and Gnomon, your cup runneth over.. So maybe you don't need to pony up 100 grand for art center 😊 art center was 2000 a semester when I went there.

I really don't know what to say in order for you to "improve" your works. I don't really know what, in your eyes, is lacking. From my own perspective, I see a lot of contrast and pushed lights that detract from the impact of the whole. I see quite a bit of this in digital art, I guess because it is easy to do and can make the work more exciting. When you don't really know what else to do to something to make it better, whatever that may be, the first two instincts are detail and contrast. Go back to the basics of drawing and how light works on form, maybe even for a get about colour for a while. Maybe work on some purposefully low contrast images-only allow yourself from 4 to 7 on the value scale.

I see you using a lot of conventions that are used in concept/digital art without maybe understanding of how or why they work. I would recommend not looking at this type of art at this point for inspiration/guidance. Look at life, fine art paintings, even photography, to get an idea of what things really look like. It's a bit like starting to learn how to draw by copying Manga. After a while you can backtrack and see how these very artificial stylizations function. I think that's where you're at now.

Has the process to create matte paintings been any different than that of creating concept art besides the time it takes to complete?

Yes matte painting is trying to paint the way a camera sees and film reacts. Illustration and concept art and fine art is a bit more artificial. You can really do a lot more with it.

Has the beauty of nature surrounding you negatively impacted your ability to paint destruction or dystopian scenery?

Haha, I thought the same thing myself 😊 at one time I was thinking of getting a loft downtown in L.a., But I'm just not an urban kind of guy.

How does your work environment affect you. Years ago I found this photo and I've been told it is your home studio. Is it? And is it still like this? I love the ambient light seeping in and being able to see nature outside but having the dark shadows inside create a nurturing environment where solitude and great ideas happen. It reminds me of a letterbox affect where black bars frame a beautiful vista.

That was my studio when I lived in Malibu before I got married. Find attached my new drawing table.

Do you have any tips for micro-painting?

Paint zoomed out quite a bit, change your brushes often, try your best not to repeat strokes, anything that looks like a collection of shapes made by a brush. Using an additive and subtractive process is very useful. It makes much work interesting shapes, or at least random, complex shapes that you find in nature.



Here's the thing with a DVD's- they are pretty expensive, and if I were to buy them from someone I would expect quite a bit out of them. At least the secret of life 😊 Maybe what they would lack in deep insight they would make up for in completeness. That is, "buy my DVD and learn everything you need to know..." I feel that I can't really deliver on either one of those. There's so much solid information about drawing and painting that is freely available and has been repeated ad nauseam of I can't see how me doing it and charging a lot for it is going to help anybody. Really, there is no magic technique that I feel that I can sell. And if it isn't magic it's already out there.

And going from beginning to end, from which end of the pencil to hold to gold medal at illustration west would be far too large and undertaking, even if I was capable. And again, this information is already out there. I'm not really a fan of Loomis, but there's a lot of really good information in there. There are countless excellent books on drawing. And even DVD's from this company called gnomon, of all things 😊

So I did a bunch of lectures and demos, all of it was pretty bad. I did quite a few hours and it turned out the sound was bad 🙄 So I don't know where my DVD stands. I will try again. Doing this master class helped a bit I think.